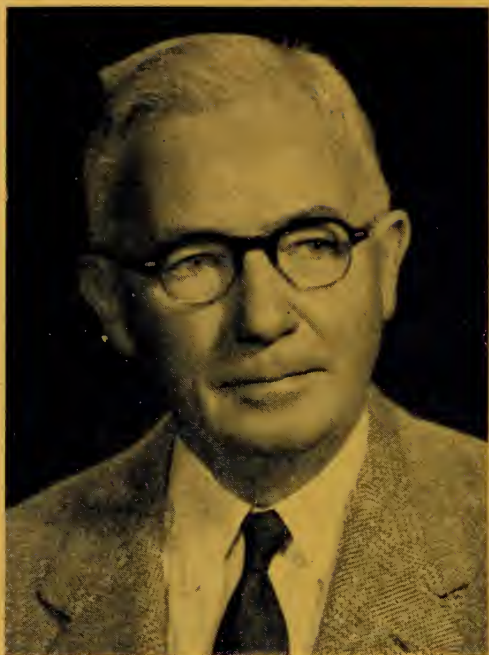




THE HUNGRY EYE

By Raymond F. Piper

AN INTRODUCTION TO COSMIC ART



THE AUTHOR

The author taught philosophy (metaphysics, aesthetics, living religions, etc.) in Syracuse University from 1917 to his retirement in 1954. He studied at the Universities of Wisconsin, Boston (Ph. D.), Harvard, Grenoble, and Paris. During extensive travels in twenty countries he studied and photographed some of the greatest art monuments of East and West, and observed thirteen of the world's religions in practice.


He has contributed half of two books: *The Fields and Methods of Knowledge*, Knopf, 1929, and *Preface to Philosophy: Book of Readings*, Macmillan, 1946. He has four essays in the *Encyclopedia of the Arts*, and has written fifty articles, mainly on religious, inspirational, and esthetic subjects.

In *THE HUNGRY EYE* he summarizes his explorations of recent COSMIC ART, and describes some stirring experiences which shaped his philosophy of art. He shares adventures and discoveries in a Paris exhibition of radical art, in a classroom in Harvard Divinity School, and in a Buddhist temple-monastery in Japan.

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THE HUNGRY EYE
AN INTRODUCTION TO
COSMIC ART



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Cosmic Rhythm by Jules Struppeck

THE HUNGRY EYE

AN INTRODUCTION TO
COSMIC ART

by

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THE HUNGRY EYE

is gratefully dedicated to

SHARI MARTIN

painter—mystic—friend

who conceived this book

and named it; and to

CHRYSTALIS RAE

maker and disseminator of beauty

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Frontispiece:

Jules Struppeck, 1915—, Newcomb College, New Orleans, La. *Cosmic Rhythm*, 1950, polished yellow brass; 11" high, 15" long, 9½" deep. In a private collection.

End Piece:

Cross section of the Chambered Nautilus (Polynesia, *Nautilus Pompilius*), by courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, N. Y.

Plates:

- I. Einar Jonsson, 1874-1954. *The Birth of Psyche*, 1915-18, bronze and plaster, 94½" high. Property of the Icelandic Government, in the Museum of Einar Jonsson, Reykjavik, Iceland.
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- III. Shari Martin, 1926—, "*Christ Awareness*", 1946, oil, 46 x 36". Artist's collection, Mt. McKinley Apts., Anchorage, Alaska, and 6340 Bryn Mawr, Dr., Hollywood 28, Calif.
- IV. Bernhard O. Wahl, 1888—, Norwegian born, 4005 Seventh Ave., Brooklyn 22, N. Y. *The Reveille of the Atom*, 1945, oil, 36 x 32". Artist's collection.
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PREFACE

Adventures and discoveries in the present new age of religious-metaphysical fine arts, and the characteristics of these arts, make up the main theme of this *Introduction*. Many important ideas need to be stated clearly and firmly about this era of redirection in art. This need is a major reason for this small volume.

The book expresses, with abbreviated evidence, some basic convictions concerning the functions of the fine arts, especially in contemporary life. Some of these convictions follow. *Cosmic* and *spiritual* are important and indispensable qualities in understanding the new art; these terms are carefully defined. Distinctions are made between two kinds of vision which operate in the appropriation of significant art. The basic hungers of man are summarized.

Wide contacts with good art are needed for civilizing our emotions. Cosmic Art is a necessity for unfolding and satisfying the divine potentialities of man. Beauty is rooted in reality; that is, the Supreme Spirit is a lover and maker of beautiful things. Six stages are differentiated in the expansion of aesthetic experience from the simplest sensation up to mystic union.

Abstraction, in a definite, comprehensive sense, is presented as a necessary characteristic of effective fine art of every kind. An immense amount of human energy and time are being wasted now in the production of abstract works which are fragmentary, trivial, shoddy, egotistic, bewildering, or meaningless. To overcome these handicaps,

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a new kind of tough philosophical-religious training for artists is urgently needed. This book is an ardent appeal for a more whole-souled, expressive, humanized art. The judgment is expressed that Cosmic Art will make generous contributions to the new spiritual age which is dawning, by illuminating, enhancing, joyifying, and energizing the spiritual life of mankind.

An enthusiastic friend of Cosmic Art, Shari Martin, asked me to share soon with many friends some of the exciting and happy discoveries in my long search in a hundred countries for the finest recent religious-metaphysical art (here called Cosmic Art), executed in fresh manners or styles. Her proposed title for a book, *The Hungry Eye*, was captivating and electronic. I immediately accepted the wonderful idea, and these essays are my spontaneous response. This book is a compact anticipation of the large, illustrated volume to follow, which is designed to be an "artistic pantheon" that will offer aesthetic and spiritual delights to persons of many tastes and faiths.

The selection of illustrations in *Cosmic Art* will be limited to certain prescribed characteristics. Conventional, trite, sentimental, and imitative works will be excluded. The examination of several large, illustrated volumes of religious art yielded nothing usable. This fact is startling and provocative. For many complicated reasons, conventional religious art in this century has, on the whole, lagged painfully behind aesthetic trends and opportunities. Emphasis will be put on works which are more or less abstract and synthetic; dynamic, expressional, and original; functionally symbolic, essentialized, or ideographic. Above all they should have the three primary marks of

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good art: excellence in technical craftsmanship, attractive and satisfying form, and power to invoke significant human values.

Gerry Peirce, painter, of Tucson, Arizona, has examined many photographs in my collection. Afterwards he wrote the following estimate: "Cosmic Art is a spiritual art which has its beginnings in man's consciousness and is released through his creative nature. Though a new art form, its roots reach deeply into antiquity. Indebted to the art of all ages, and liberated by new movements of the past century, it is now crystallizing and beginning to reflect its true nature.

"This vast field which extends into all realms of artistic creative activity throughout the world has been deeply and intelligently probed by Dr. Raymond F. Piper. His findings represent to me the most significant steps in cultural advancement which have accrued in the world of art for many years. His new book should cast a light with as much significance as electricity did in the days of the lantern."

I cordially invite readers to send their creative suggestions about Cosmic Art, and to report errors in the text. I continue to be eager to learn the addresses of any artists anywhere, especially unpublicized ones, who may have works with the characteristics indicated above. Former correspondents may have relevant new creations.

I owe immeasurable and unpayable debts to thousands of generous and loyal helpers around the world. I am profoundly grateful for their every kindly assistance. I deeply regret that it is impractical to express my appreciation by names in this volume. I have been greatly blessed by their continuing encouragement, counsel, and diverse

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help, and many will be recognized in the later volume on *Cosmic Art*. The judicious criticism and steadfast support through the years of my wife, Lila K. Piper, have been my mainstay and delight.

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CHAPTER I

SYMBOLISM AND OBJECTIVE OF *THE HUNGRY EYE*

"In the fine arts man has travelled farther from the animals and nearer to the angels than in any other of his enterprises or accomplishments."—W. Macneile Dixon, *The Human Situation*, 1937, Chapter XX. The Divine Arts.

The Hungry Eye is the personal story of my adventurous quest around the world for Cosmic Art and a report of the surprising results. Facts have an eloquent way of speaking for themselves. The search took hold of me thirty-five years ago while I was viewing a giddy and chaotic exhibition of art in Paris. To my astonishment I found myself looking at *The Infinite* portrayed in visible form! It was a superb painting, in gorgeous colors, a clear and magnetic expression of one of man's most abstruse and momentous concepts. That fact, that revelation, gave birth to the idea of a book on Cosmic Art.

Other driving experiences reenforced the idea until Cosmic Art became almost an obsession. In Harvard Divinity School I had discovered and established the metaphysical foundation of beauty: it is rooted in God's nature. (I shall freely use the wonderful word *beauty* because it is the best term in the English language to hold together all of the multifarious values and delights of aesthetic experience.) During a tremendous mystical experience in a Buddhist temple in Japan I found that

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fine arts are indispensable for realizing some of the loftiest joys of religion. In India I discovered unforgettable modern paintings that spoke with mystic eloquence. In Peiping the solemn symbolism of spaciousness in Chinese architecture and painting gradually gripped my mind. It was then that I envisaged the ideal temple for the worship of God. Within high stone walls on crowded streets? No, but set within a landscaped beauty-land of a thousand or ten thousand acres, with vistas, forests, and flowered retreats, hedged airstrips and parking lots, acres of glass, elevating musical creations, moving rainbow lights, magnificent cosmic paintings, sculptures, and dances, sublime poetry, prophetic orations, and, and . . .

These experiences, supplemented by the stimulating friendships of more than a hundred cosmic artists, the assembling of two thousand photographs and original works of Cosmic Art from sixty-four countries of the world,—these, and other experiences, have produced certain insights and convictions about modern art and the dawning age of abstract spiritual art which I feel compelled to share.

Few people know what is actually going on in the field of metaphysical and religious art (that is, Cosmic Art) which is executed in the fascinating variety of present-day idioms. When people look at a typical exhibition of “modern” art, they usually flounder before its novelities, puzzle over its purposes, and often end with disgust. Their bewilderment is not surprising since the motives of many artists are obscure, trivial, or nonexistent. There are hundreds of artists scattered about the earth, however, who do have something important to say about the meaning of life and are saying it with clarity, forcefulness, and artistic excellence. My aim is to unlock the doors

of their creations, to open adventurous ways to the understanding and enjoyment of contemporary metaphysical art, and to present a few examples of it.

The Hungry Eye involves a wealth of symbolism. For one thing it denotes *man's yearning to learn by seeing for himself*. He is by nature curious, questing, always looking for something new. And he learns more through his eyes than through any other sense. Modern inventions now present him with an overwhelming magnitude of visual stimulations. I started to list them; the job was too long. They include the visible presentation of hundreds of objects which have been invisible since creation. "Finally," declares Pitirim A. Sorokin, "as the crowning jewel of the four-hundred-year development of Sensual Visualism, we have . . . photography and movies. It is the finishing touch. . . . We are indeed living in the most scientific, most Visual, most illusionary, and therefore most unreal world. . . . Reality is felt to be less real than this theatrical deceit." (*Fluctuation of Forms of Art*, American Book Co., 1937, p. 367.) And cosmic artists are now making us see and feel vividly abstract and significant ideas.

Eye appeal is here to stay, ultimately because light is the source of life. "The hunger of the organism for satisfaction through the eye is hardly less than its urgent impulsion for food." (John Dewey) The reign of vision is inevitable, powerful, and permanent. The scientific race is on, to control light and all kinds of rays. In this pursuit the partnership of spiritual engineers is necessary for preserving and expanding the well-being of mankind. (Please wait patiently for the definition of *cosmic* and *spiritual* in Chapter III.) If spiritual science, spiritual power, and spiritual art in their several aspects do not keep pace

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with material and technological power, our race is doomed to a wretched barbarism. It is imperative that spiritual leaders of every kind develop now the best possible visual aids for understanding and enjoying those ideals which are crucial for the survival and evolution of our earthly family. This demand rests upon the solid principle of an old English rhyme which runs,

“What the eye does not admire,
The heart does not desire.”

Modern man would thoroughly enjoy having his religious-metaphysical experiences articulated and enhanced through the visual charm of whole-souled modern art, and why not? The two chief reasons have been that too many artists are ignorant of such experiences and too many religious leaders are ignorant of such art. Fortunately hundreds of artists and religionists are now awakening to the high power of the new art in humanizing our tribe, and of increasing our delights in living. This little volume is an introduction to the values and trends of Cosmic Art, while the larger volume to come will continue the argument and present hundreds of illustrations. Both volumes are designed to help readers construct an adequate spiritual philosophy and thereby to attain the foundation for a just evaluation and enjoyment of contemporary art and the good life.

These new metaphysical arts are springing up spontaneously on every continent. It is important to remember that they are not confined to one country or to one religion. They are breaking out simultaneously, in fact, from the traditional settings of all of the fourteen living religions of the world. The two youngest, the Bahá'í Faith and Caodaism of Indo-China, have produced two temples

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of extraordinary originality, fitness, and impressiveness, and the Moslems are completing an exquisite mosque in Washington. The devotee of any faith may gain aesthetic delight and religious inspiration from the artistic creations of other religions. About ten faiths will be represented in the larger book, as three are in this one.

People in many countries are catching on to the vision and significance of universal Cosmic Art. I have a collection of one hundred forty-nine letters of encouragement from eighteen countries. Examples from nine nations follow. K. H. in Germany: "In our day mighty spiritual powers are working upon us and we are at a turning point. Art is one of the means which the Absolute uses to set himself forth. I greet you with best wishes for the book." V. M. M. in Ecuador: "Your work on cosmic art will awaken universal interest and will open new paths to the art of tomorrow." J. H. in Ireland: "The metaphysical and religious motive is producing notable artistic works at the present time."

L. S. in Paris, August 28, 1948: "Your book comes in a period when all painting in Paris is materialistic. I feel myself isolated and uncomprehended, although I know that a new spiritual epoch is en route. Your book proclaims the hatching of a new direction in the art of the future." M. F. in England: "Your work . . . seems to me truly 'integrating,' one of the whispers, for those with ears to hear, of the coming spiritual age." P. H. P. in Israel: "The idea of your enterprise is close to our hearts." R. Z. in New Zealand: "Art alone may be the one unifying means left to prevent utter dismemberment between nation and nation. International artists do grasp, by aid of a common tongue, the fundamentals of life and its unity."

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R. S. S. in India: "You may not be fully aware of the extent of attention and respect your work on cosmic art is commanding. You are doing a monumental work." G. G., Mexican painter writing from Paris on February 6, 1955: "I talked to many of the younger painters in Europe, and they all feel that the religious motive, and metaphysical, in modern painting is gaining ground every day, despite what the 'art critics' say."

That Cosmic Art should be world-wide need not surprise us when we recognize that in all arts, as in all religions and sciences, there are common principles—common because they spring from longings and patterns in human nature, ultimately from one Supreme Being. Thus, could a human construction in any country be called a work of art if it lacked rhythmic vitality, organic variety in unity, and evidence of skill? The artist enjoys one principle which the scientist cannot apply, that of novelty in the forms of expression. Cosmic Art in its essence is universal. By revealing the loves of many peoples, it awakens our minds to new sentiments and more intense feelings of worldwide kinship.

Let us ask now, what do people with a hungry eye really want? The true answer is fantastic. It is suggested by this verse from a Jain scripture (*Uttaradhyayana* 8:16), "And if somebody should give the whole earth to one man, he would not have enough, so difficult is it to satisfy anybody." Practical considerations confine our reply here to a few desires connected with the fine arts.

(1) People want to meet the beautiful and enjoy it; they want charming color, sound, and pattern, lively action, manifested power, exciting adventure, risk and novelty, and, for intervals of humor, the fantastic, grotesque, and amazing. For a condensed sampling of such wants,

imagine the attractions of Detroit's new shopping center: glowing buildings, flowers, sculptures and mobiles, gay colors, fantastic creatures, and bustling activity.

Aesthetic wants are not transient fads. They are among the most irresistible of all our instincts. Otto Klineberg, in his *Social Psychology*, classifies human drives into four groups of decreasing dependability. While he assigns sex to the second group, "aesthetic drives," along with hunger, thirst, and the need for sleep, belong in the first group, "which are absolutely dependable, have a definite physiological basis, and admit of no exceptions." In other words, you can be certain that any human being you meet anywhere will sooner or later show hunger for food, water, and aesthetic delight.

(2) Thrills on the sensuous level, however, are short-lived. Moments come in the silence of thought, darkness, or tragedy, when the hungry eye reaches out to see something permanent in the rushing stream of existence. It yearns for goods that are not consumed forever in the moment of enjoyment, goods which are abiding, perhaps sharable and universal. Feelings are notoriously transient, but ideas endure, and so do works of art in which ideas, feelings, and forms get joined together. If, therefore, a man can find works of art of any kind (poetry, music, painting, sculpture, etc.) in which the great philosophical and religious conceptions which he needs are beautifully expressed, these will answer best of all—save for trustworthy friends—the hunger for lasting values. "*Ars longa, vita brevis*—art is long and time is fleeting."

Consider what happened to the teachings of Jesus. He wrote nothing, and not for nearly forty years did his disciples record his words in the gospels. Then what they remembered most vividly and transmitted orally were

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not the general propositions which he probably uttered, but the truths which he clothed in poetic metaphor, in the exquisite forms of aphorism and parable. Without his essential spirit as expressed in poetry, the teachings of Jesus and his religion would have soon died. Feelings come and go, but ideas, works of art, and selves may go on forever. As men face the unpicturably long and precarious future, they yearn for some permanent realities with which they can identify themselves.

(3) Then, too, contemporary man is hungry for artistic symbols which are at once modern, fresh, and adequate for expressing and celebrating his longings. An anonymous proverb says, "Seeing's believing, but feeling's the truth." We live by those ideas which our emotions support. Hence, we hunger to see our great feelings displayed in eloquent new artistic patterns.

We recognize also that the art styles of the past are simply inadequate to express and communicate contemporary emotions. Our century has already experienced two world wars, dreadful new forms of political and technological power, the discovery of amazing machines of benevolence and destruction, wars of ideas and indescribable suffering, multitudes of strange psychic phenomena, and immense extension of the mysteries of existence, and multitudes of new cults, religions, and philosophies in search of metaphysical truth and salvation of some kind. These complex vicissitudes of history have generated in us a multitude of emotions which in their unique ways are frivolous and solemn, painful and joyous, conflicting and dubious, terrifying and hopeful.

In short, never before has the supply of psychic materials for artistic expression been so varied and inviting as it is today. And never before has it been so im-

perative that artists know the activities, sorrows, and longings of mankind. One artist (L. Vladimir Goriansky) responds with this desire: "And one thing more: artists are always hungry in every respect. I am especially hungry for unusual thoughts and ideas." We want the artists of our time to find suitable materials and symbolic forms for freshly articulating the momentous emotions of our contemporary existence, and we want our philosophers to evaluate them with a far greater assurance of wisdom.

Another fact is important: Never before have artists had access to such an immense range of art forms, materials, and techniques as they have today. Modern man, therefore, wants artists in their jobs to keep pace with the expression of contemporary feelings, desires, and ideals. Thus in an age of power, we should like a considerable part of artistic creations to reflect powerful, dynamic, commanding qualities. We insistently hunger for new and effective interpretations of our feelings in artistic creations which are beautiful, significant, and illuminating. We want these creations to satisfy both our visual and our spiritual needs.

(4) Finally, the man with the hungry eye longs for that consolation of cosmic security which can only spring from knowing the truth about reality. *The Hungry Eye* expresses the yearning of every man to be a seer; that is, to know the secret laws of abundant and happy living in visible and invisible realms. This powerful yearning cannot be satisfied with anything less than Godliness. Man's mind remains restless until he experiences for himself those ideas and intuitions, those acts and arts, which awaken his dormant divine splendor. *The Hungry Eye*, then, symbolizes man's metaphysical urge to find creative

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food and light for unfolding his divine inheritance. It is his *instinct for self-realization by expansion Godward*. This quest constitutes the way of the seer, "the life divine;" it is a philosophic and spiritual path. This way is open to you and to everyone.

The paths to God and to the power of Godliness are many and arduous, yet adventurous and rewarding. Ramakrishna suggests, "As one can ascend to the top of a house by means of a ladder or a bamboo or a staircase or a rope, so diverse are the ways and means to approach God." *The Hungry Eye* is a pathfinder to God through certain novel forms of artistic beauty created in our time. The cosmic artist starts with nature and ends with God.

Everything is a symbol of God for those who can read his language, because every created thing is concrete and reveals the mind of its maker. Man's creations likewise are concrete and manifest his nature. If, therefore, one wants to know the realities of God and of man, he must learn to read the sign language of symbols, of artistic creations of every kind, both human and divine.

The paths to God are many because he manifests himself variously in reality. Hence, we come to know reality (everything that is or that acts) in several ways. Science is the possession of reality in terms of intellectual symbols or concepts. Fine art is the possession of reality in terms of emotive symbols or works of art. Philosophy is the possession of reality in terms of a total coherent theory of its fundamental structure and governing laws. Religion is the possession of reality in its greatest fullness in terms of abundant and joyful living in the light and service of God. Religion, or the spiritual life, in its perfected forms is thus the supreme synthesis of other ways to reality and to bliss. To travel any road to reality,

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however, presupposes a sincere and persevering quest, the art of the wide-open eye, and creative faith. The realization of truth in the inspired forms of Cosmic Art brings the mind into the precincts of that ultimate, ineffable experience or vision called mystic union, *samadhi*, or oneness with God.

CHAPTER II

VARIETIES OF VISION

"The heart perceives that which the eye cannot see."
—Abraham Ben Nathan Hayarchi.

This book is a primer of vision. The preceding reflections intimate that seeing has diverse meanings. Two basic kinds of vision which man seeks need now to be distinguished. The first or sensuous vision consists in perceiving things or events in the manner of the practical man, the scientist, or the nature lover. However, as "The Preacher" in Ecclesiastes 1:8 declares, "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." The second kind, spiritual vision, consists in discerning the intelligence and values abiding in all realities, and in discovering how to develop the image of God within our human selves. One artist has declared, "I am very desirous to represent those things behind the hill which I will never see." (Yves Tanguy in *Art News*, September 1954, p. 27.)

These two fundamental categories of vision, sensuous and spiritual, correspond to the two primary aspects of an artistic work, of which all other factors are derivative. Aestheticians call this pair by different names, as form and feeling, design and drama, surface and meaning, pattern and personality, substance and spirit. In aesthetic contemplation these coexisting factors function and interflow as phases of a single whole. While we are sensing the surface qualities of a work of art, like a painting or

symphony, we are at the same time waiting or listening for its import or feeling value. In talking about these integrants we must use different words but we intuit them as a single harmony.

The distinction between sensuous and spiritual vision has a second and more profound source. It is rooted in two aspects of the human self which the Indian master, Sri Aurobindo, one of the few greatest minds of our century, thus beautifully describes, "We have a double psychic entity in us, the surface desire-soul which works in our vital cravings, our emotions, aesthetic faculty and mental seeking for power, knowledge and happiness, and a subliminal psychic entity [distinct from the submental or subconscious], a pure power of light, love, joy, and refined essence of being which is our true soul behind the outer form of psychic existence we so often dignify by that name. . . . The subliminal mind in us is open to the universal knowledge of the Cosmic Mind, . . . to the universal delight which the cosmic soul takes in its own existence. . . . Discovering self and spirit man discovers God; he finds out that there is a Self beyond the temporal: he comes to the vision of that Self in the cosmic consciousness as the divine Reality behind Nature and this world of beings." (*The Life Divine*, American edition, E. P. Dutton & Co., 1949, pp. 203-204, 621.)

Cosmic Art is inevitable to man because he is inherently divine. The chief components of reality—nature, life, spirit, God—join their forces to create man. He is born a "baby god," an incarnate spirit, whose eternal career is the quest to know, to serve, and to enjoy God. Tagore thus praises the Universal Architect: "Thou hast made us endless, such is thy pleasure." (*Gitanjali*, Macmillan Co., 1914, line 1.) The divine seed of man's soul, for its

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budding, flowering, and fruiting, requires fitting nourishment, loving kindness, and adventurous faith. To find the right food for spiritual growth is a far more delicate and responsible task than to find it for bodily growth. Often man's soul is hungry without knowing what kind of food would nurture it nor where to find it. Sometimes he vaguely recognizes food as good because of an unwitting presentiment that it will supply an inarticulate want of his spirit. To come upon such food, however, he needs to forage in many promising places. Love of beauty, then, is an intrinsic component of our human nature; it is a part of our divine inheritance, of the image of God which we are; and responding to its promptings will lead us to unpredictable delights.

Sensuous seeing determines two kinds of aesthetic enjoyment. Pure sense beauty consists in the pleasures springing from simple given materials, like a bird call or a robin's blue eggs, a jeweled crystal or luminous insect. Next, beauty of form includes all satisfactions that spring from attractive patterns, whether simple or complex. "The form is the sum total of all that is perceived in a design" (Jules Struppeck, *The Creation of Sculpture*, Henry Holt & Co., 1952, p. x.)

The second kind of seeing is urged in Jeremiah's exclamation (5:21), "Here this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes and see not, who have ears and hear not." St. Paul (Ephesians 1:17-18) gives thanks for the spirit of wisdom which enlightens the eyes of the heart. This kind of seeing is a visional penetration, an insight that goes beneath or beyond the sight of the eyes. This distinction between sensuous and intuiting vision appears only on the intellectual level. On the aesthetic level,

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when there is present any degree of spiritual insight, the two aspects of seeing interpenetrate, because in an effective artistic creation, the form perfectly fits and expresses the feeling, is wholly alive with the emotional value. Yet, this "beauty of meaning-in-form" is a significant expansion or complement of sensuous beauty. It is well to remember that sensuous seeing itself is not merely a physiological process, but a mental activity too of a complicated kind and colored by the perceiver's character.

The Buddha once declared that a man starves unless he eats daily two kinds of food, physical and spiritual. Likewise man starves if he watches only the passing spectacle of phenomena and misses the abiding, invisible Spirit, the cosmic thread, which holds all things together. The terrific assault of modern life upon our eyes and ears commandeers the attention of the multitudes, who are losing or ignoring the transcendental significance of visible phenomena. The inner self may be starved through excess of seeing by the outer eye. A little reflection compels the insight that visible things must really be far more than their appearances in the momentary present. The order and beauty of nature and life imply an Intelligence that is creatively immanent in all events.

Among the thousands of existing names for this Spirit, I follow the Indian preference for *Satchitananda*, which unites the three primordial components of his nature: Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. The fine Anglo-Saxon word *God* serves as a simple and familiar sign for this Ultimate Reality. The superb Sikh poet Kabir has sung:

"Within the Supreme Brahma, the worlds are being told like beads: Look upon that rosary with the eyes of

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wisdom." (*One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, translated by Rabindranath Tagore, Macmillan & Co., London, 1929, No. XIV.)

The Hungry Eye is an introduction to the arts of sensuous and spiritual perception as operating in the field of the fine arts, especially of the visual arts. It is devoted to awakening persons to the importance and delight of responding to the sign language of divine and human creation, especially to the language of the marvelous new metaphysical art which is upsurging, increasingly and simultaneously, in many parts of the world. By participating in these aesthetic delights, modern man may learn to enjoy the complementary spiritual insight which gives significance to sensuous vision. The functions of Cosmic Arts are to reveal, enhance, and illuminate the treasures and vistas of value in reality. Let us hasten on then in the quest of wisdom concerning the All-seeing Eye.

CHAPTER III

MEANINGS OF *COSMIC* AND *SPIRITUAL*

"I sit in a piece of space and think infinity;
I sit in a piece of time and think eternity;
I think of thinking and all is boundless."

—Barbara L. Sanderson.

Cosmic and spiritual experiences are kindred and crucial in our selfic development. I am fond of both words because of their unique richness of meaning. My search for substitutes has been fruitless. They are indispensable for comprehending metaphysical art. Their ambiguities baffle, but also invite to clear and rewarding thought.

The term *cosmos* is a philosophical jewel which irradiates seventy-five English words. Its Greek form, *kosmos*, joins two qualities and generates two adjectives: *cosmic* (pertaining to universal order or harmony) and *cosmetic* (pertaining to adornment or decoration). Their opposites are chaos and disfigurement. Pliny's Latin translation of the noun was "perfect, absolute, and elegant world." *Cosmos* means "the entire manifestation of Spirit," the organized and beautiful All of reality. *Cosmic experience designates any kind of conscious linkage with this beautiful ordered whole which is the total universe.* It does not refer to particular phenomena as such, but to the general laws, causes, supports, values, or perspectives of things, especially to that all-pervading interlinking Absolute who at once maintains and transcends all entities and events.

Universal *linkage* or *nexus* is the key to understanding

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cosmic experiences. O. L. Reiser declares, "The term 'cosmos' is used to designate the weld of the visible manifest and the invisible unmanifest of the worlds." (*Scientia*, July-August, 1954, p. 10.) These far reaching linkages are experienced in several typical ways: as general scientific laws and metaphysical principles; as artistic symbols or metaphors (for example, God is a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere); and as religious or mystical ascents to the unifying awareness of the Divine Presence. Thus the exploration of Cosmic Art happily blends the three interlinked studies, metaphysics, theology, and aesthetics, to which I have devoted most of my life.

Cosmic consciousness, whether in the child or the adept, reaches into the fringes, if not into the depths, of the infinite. Man is so constituted that he cannot avoid having cosmic longings and emotions. The child hardly learns to count 1, 2, 3, before he discovers that this series is endless, and thus he has the incipient feeling of an infinite. When an infant says *sitted* after hearing a parent use *patted*, he has the foretaste of universal conception, man's most marvelous power. As a result of multiform encounters with falling and dodging, dropping and catching things, he grasps quickly his teacher's generalization about gravitation and later the idea of universal energy. Sometimes a child is keener than sophisticated adults in the essential philosophical art of seeing import in the obvious. Cosmic, then, characterizes all feeling and thinking which suggest meanings that point beyond momentary sensation or impulse, to the structure and laws of world order, beauty, and worth, to the spiritual activities and destiny of mankind, and above all to the Supreme Mind and other unseen beings. Cosmic Art is transcendental art.

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The mission of cosmic artists is to generate concrete forms with such charm, intensity, and suggestiveness as will compel us to feel more vividly, truly, and joyously some of the far-reaching, value-full linkages with transcendental realities, especially with that Invisible Spirit who controls the connecting threads of all things. Let us extend generous patience to those daring artists who seek sensuous symbols for formless ideas and beings. A fine work of Cosmic Art seems enveloped by an ethereal atmosphere which is alive with spiritual power. It "reveals the mood of cosmic order and very likely too the comradeship" of the Great Spirit (L. Vladimir Gorian-sky.) It is at least a peakhole into some expanding vision; it may become a portal to fuller self-realization.

When cosmic is characterized in the broadest sense, as above, it includes spiritual, but many people choose the word *spiritual* for holding together in their minds religious and other higher values. The spiritual life has three phases which correspond to the three kinds of existing spirits: (1) The *religious* phase, referring to God and all experiences related to him and his revelations. (2) The *psychic* phase, pertaining to immaterial beings, such as ghosts, angels, and immortal souls, and to dealings with them. (3) The *ethical* phase, relating to the many "higher" functions of the human mind itself.

Let us develop the third or ethical meaning, and define "higher." We may start from the fact of the tremendous potential of every human being for enlarging his realm of value experiences through appropriate education. In general, *spiritual qualities appear as an expansion or transformation of some familiar phase of our conscious life*. They widely permeate this life, but are not at first evident. Until spiritual essences emerge in

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fairly full form, it is difficult to differentiate them from ordinary mental activities. More often than not the moment of their birth cannot be dated.

There are many spots in the garden of consciousness where spiritual flowers may bloom. The first opening flower may be the awakening to self-consciousness, in that luminous silence of self-recognition when I identify myself as an active, conscious subject, a unique agent, capable of introspection, self-direction, responsibility, and dignity. These are important qualities of the spiritual life. At the same time I may discover that I am a continuing, remembering, time-transcending person, the abiding center and bearer of many values. I know that one state of consciousness is always followed by another and that all states belong to me. Such a discovery is a foretaste of eternal life.

Any of the common experiences of intelligent living may become spiritual by expansion. Elementary thinking becomes systematic reasoning, love of order, devotion to truth. Simple sensations and affections may be refined into exquisite aesthetic responses and the prolonged delights of measured beauty. Day dreaming is transformed into creative imagination. Flighty wishes and impulses develop into discriminating and persevering power to choose and to achieve wisely. Love of self, parents, and friends evolves into more and more inclusive and vivid mutuality and loyalty. Many basic drives unite to realize that satisfying and exalted spiritual value called religion. Religion is the art of complete living in cooperation with the Cosmic Power. "All spiritual life," declares Sri Aurobindo, "is in its principle a growth into divine life" (*The Life Divine*, p. 903).

The spiritual life, then, consists of various developed

phases or transformations of everyday experience. *They are called higher values because they are more discriminating, permanent, inclusive, sharable, and expansive.* The spiritual life evolves by increasing the range and clarity of one's ideals *together with* more power and joy in their progressive realization. Ideals are future values which we acknowledge ought to be realized. Hence, spiritual life oscillates between a present light and an adventurous preview. In the last chapter we shall examine, for example, how contemplation of a work of Cosmic Art is at one moment self-absorbing aesthetic delight and at another the bridge to higher mystic experience.

The universal and characteristic property of spiritual experience is *aspiration*, the ever recurring sentiment that there is another greater good to come. Thomas Aquinas included this urge among man's innate tendencies. Sri Aurobindo expresses it beautifully as "the urge to self-exceeding." (*Self* in this phrase, and in *self-realization*, is always understood to mean a socialized, benevolent self who cares about his neighbor's welfare as well as his own. The use of *selfic* as the adjective for *self* is convenient, and avoids the common association of *self* with *selfishness*.) Cosmic Art is spiritual art in the sense of inviting man to expand his self or soul toward some vast perspective or finer good.

Now the thrilling, culminating question occurs: May not all elements of the spiritual life be forms of love? The affirmation of this proposition, I think, can be proved by detailed evidence. What are wisdom, beauty, and holiness; creative work, loyal friendship, and communal justice; generosity, hospitality, and peace, but different applications or realizations of love? The spiritual life is a life of energy, benevolent power, disciplined freedom,

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and nobility; also of adventure, harmony, and ineffable bliss. But do not all men love these qualities, and seek them, because they love them? *The essence of the spiritual life is love that longs to expand value-wise in all directions, and the perfecting of human life consists in the growth of such comprehensive love.* In their highest forms, spiritual life, cosmic consciousness, and the life divine are synonyms. Cosmic Art is spiritual art, and the contemplation of it makes the soul expand skyward.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEED OF WHOLE-SOULED ART FOR A NEW AGE

"I have to integrate a great deal of experience into a painting before I can complete it. I have to have hundreds of hours of knowing something before it sinks into a picture."—Frederick Haucke.

The human race is floundering in the murky waters of a new epoch of evolution, *the reign of mind*. Geologists do not yet agree to call it the Psychozoic Age because, they say, man's failure to conquer himself does not yet warrant that name. Geologist Earl T. Apfel declares, "When man rises to the point where he has control both over material things and over himself, the use of the term will be justified. At present religious and spiritual phenomena remain *the great unexplored*. We continue in the Cenozoic Age, the rule of rocks, begun sixty million years ago."

Theological time, however, is longer than geological time, and all times may somehow flow from the eternal now in the mind of the Infinite. We finite selves can think certain infinite concepts like time, space, and causality; and some rare prophets, who portend the spiritual giants and norms of the future, have heard the Divine Voice speak of the plan of the ages and its governing principles.

These prophets and other creative minds of our planet have already produced enough wonders to demonstrate the revolutionary principle that marks the dawn of an

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Age of Mind, the principle that man is a maker, a poet, a creator, and not merely a passive puppet of a mechanical environment. Aristotle taught that "Art is human making in the image of divine making, for art emulates the processes of nature, and God is the prime mover of nature." (Gilbert and Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics*, The Macmillan Co., 1939, p. 63.) Man is a spirit who may transform nature, society, and himself for the purpose of enlarging the empire of human happiness, or he may renounce his divine birthright and debase himself to beastliness and destruction. Evidences of man's creative power abound in the fields of scientific discovery, technology, and the arts, of business and social organizations, and of religious and psychic phenomena. Precise experimental researches like *The Reach of the Mind* by J. B. Rhine illustrate a conspicuous new fact in our time, namely, the beginning of a scientific proof that man is fundamentally mind-centered rather than brain-centered. This proof confirms the ancient truth of religionists and philosophers that mind is a distinctive order of reality.

In the dawn of this momentous age our crucial problems undoubtedly are spiritual in nature. Arnold J. Toynbee, consummate interpreter of history, affirms, "As we enter 1955 we face a fateful decision, to substitute a new spiritual vision for the secular ideals that have guided us for two hundred and fifty years. I expect to see a spiritual awakening in the west in our time." (*New York Times Magazine*, December 26, 1954.) S. Radhakrishnan, philosopher and Vice-President of India, wrote recently, "The events of the last few weeks portend either the end of human history or a turning point in it. This warning is given to us in letters of fire. We recover moral control and return to spiritual life or we pass out as so many

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other species. Survival demands a change in the spirit of our lives. . . . The threat to human civilization could be met only on 'the deeper levels of consciousness.' If we fail to overcome the discord between power and spirit, we will be destroyed by the forces which we had the knowledge to create but not the wisdom to control." (*Ba-mag Quarterly Magazine*, July, 1954, pp. 10-11.)

Another philosopher of history, Pitirim A. Sorokin, concluded his extensive statistical studies of western European art with the assertion that "the twentieth century shows a conscious reaction against Visualism [Sensate Art]; . . . a considerable decrease of sensual work, a slight rise of religious subjects; . . . ending a Sensate wave and probably [indicating] the beginning of the Ideational Wave." (*Fluctuation of Forms of Art*, pp. 504, 420.) Ideational mentality, he asserts, puts trust in inner and divine revelation, everlasting Being, and permanent values, and is characterized by Idealism, religiosity, quietism, indeterminism, mysticism, etc.

I hold strongly the belief that the increasing creation and appreciation of Cosmic Art will contribute potently to man's spiritual awakening and thus to the establishment of the new idealistic age. Both this introduction and the larger book are devoted to indicating how the fine arts may give positive assistance to man's remaking of himself and his world. The basic danger that now imperils mankind is that the social and spiritual sciences which are the eternally necessary foundation of material science will not grow strong enough before the proponents and products of material science shall have destroyed civilization itself.

In the field of the fine arts certain varieties of sensate art are obstructing the growth of what Sorokin calls

ideational mentality. This kind of art is produced by that populous group of abstract and nonobjective artists who deliberately seek to omit human symbols and values from their constructions. The latter too often are empty husks which tickle the eye but starve the mind. Yet for several decades they have received the most spectacular and sustained publicity. The resulting fact is that *such artists are destroying, for a multitude of people, an intelligent and expanding interest in art.*

After visiting exhibitions which abound in works that are trivial, crude, chaotic, patchwork, theatrical, egoistic, queer or wild in one way or another, one may be completely baffled. When such works stir no human interest beyond a flash of novelty, many observers resent the immense waste of human effort expended on them and rebel against modern art with disgust. As I am writing this chapter I receive this comment from a friend, a superior painter and able critic (L. V. G.): "I am looking in the galleries of modernistic efforts and at reproductions in art publications; this kind of painting is torturing me."

What are the widespread drives to nonobjective art? Undoubtedly they are many. Is not one frequent cause, poverty of soul, like that of an art student who once consulted me about suicide. He lamented, "I am in trouble. I have studied art since boyhood and have mastered the techniques of painting, but here I am now with nothing to say." Is the cause sometimes a despairing surrender to the accidents of unguided automation? Is it due in part to an exclusive worship at the "altars of steel" where impersonal giants give birth to the mechanical comforts of modern life? It is due also to aberrations of geometrical genius, or the fruit of a monkish devotion to some vacuous ideal of "purity" as illustrated by titles like

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“point in space,” “white on white,” or “homage to the square”?

Nonobjective works are sometimes manifestations of the order of nature and of an unwitting quest or feeling for the infinite. Yet when these works are opaque or muddling, how can one learn the artist's motive unless he tell us? Usually he cannot, or will not, or denies any motive beyond the charm of color and pattern. Decorative charm is at once the glory and the default of nonfigurative art. Why want more than decor? Because those who know both beauty-in-form and beauty-of-meaning-in-form affirm that the union of the two is more satisfying than the first alone. But in asking the artist's motive we have unavoidably returned to human interest. *This book is an appeal for the expansion and perfection of human values in the fine arts, especially in the visual arts.*

I belong to that growing crowd of people who are tired of manless decorative display in art and who want *significant art*, that is to say, art which will help us to feel and understand the complexity, richness, and dignity of human life in our time. Significant art expresses or symbolizes a human value of some kind as an integral function of decorative pattern. I know that for myself I need such art to discover myself as a human being developing under the conditions of the twentieth century. I like to contemplate from time to time artistic works which lead me into some big idea or sentiment beyond the sensuous design.

Henri Delacroix, distinguished aesthetician of the Sorbonne, has declared, “All complete aesthetic pleasure is a synthesis. . . . To perceive or to construct forms is the law of art. . . . It is this truth which gives strength to Formalism. . . . Finally, without a signification, with-

out a value, aesthetic pleasure remains poor. . . . We ask a picture, a poem, a symphony, to be not only a beautiful arrangement of lines or colors, or words or sounds, but also that this beautiful arrangement shall symbolize a state of mind. There are works that are well done and agreeable, but empty. Inversely, there are works that are charged with beautiful intentions, but do not arrive at adequate expression. Poetry is made with words and ideas. Ideas are necessary to be a painter, musician, or poet. That is the truth which gives strength to Idealism." (*Psychologie de l'art*, Félix Alcan, Paris, 1927, pp. 92-93.)

What are hungry observers to do when they are starving from the lean diet of "pure" art? They may resort to traditional representational art; or disregard art altogether, and leave their homes empty of it; or they may hit upon the idea that satisfying and significant modern art must exist somewhere, and that they need to search more diligently and cultivate new approaches for its enjoyment.

In any case, access to such creations is difficult because they are scattered in remote and unknown places, or appear mixed with many dull or dehumanized works. It would seem that hungry eyes would welcome an extensive collection of reproductions of radiant metaphysical art from the forty countries which are producing it. My collection of two thousand selected photographs indicates a current transition from fragmentary to whole-souled art. It hails the emergence of a trend to humanly significant creations with fresh, synthetic characteristics, and abstract in the sense to be defined in Chapter XII. It represents a return of art to man, without losing the variety of modern technique and manners.

Every developed style or manner of art offers its own

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kind of attraction and greatness. The greatness of representational art has been to glorify the common things of existence, to do "full justice to man's natural joy in the beauties of nature," but photography now largely fulfills this need. "The trouble with realism is the seeing things as they are. But things are never merely what they are. Especially are they what they have been; and also what they are to be. It is this magical trinitarian seeing that constitutes vision."—Albert E. Johnson. The greatness of nonobjective art is to liberate the mind from confinement to merely concrete things as such, and to elaborate multitudes of the endless possibilities of pattern. At the present time man's hungry soul craves for the realization of another kind of greatness in art, that of synthetic, idealistic, spiritual, or Cosmic Art.

The appeal for such art is no retrospective endeavor to revive the manner or theory of Renaissance art. It is an anticipant challenge to artists to create new forms which adequately and vividly will express the significant emotions and ideals of our age, and the finer of man's perennial instincts. Scientists, educators, religionists, and most artists, are sadly unaware of how very much certain kinds of "modern" art are robbing art itself of its power to enlarge man's wisdom, happiness, and glory. They also are unaware of the great promise now offered by a wide range of metaphysical art which is emerging around the earth.

The development of idealistic art in the coming century offers to young artists of today unparalleled opportunity, adventure, and difficulties. Their high mission is to glorify, through their compelling creations, the fundamental values and dignity of man, to magnify universal perspectives in a cosmopolitan era, and to expand tran-

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sient mortal consciousness into a sense of the eternal. The excess of turmoil, confusion, and dashing agitation in contemporary art needs to be offset by artistic qualities that beget serenity, unity and peace of mind, and cosmic security. By celebrating the greatness, majesty, and divinity of man, they can make the current art which debases, ridicules, animalizes, or ignores man look penurious, weak, and trivial. They can help to generate the tranquillity, compassion, sensitivity, and higher comprehension which men really desire.

Such idealistic art represents the transition from fragmentary to whole-souled art. It is synthetic in the sense of utilizing the best known techniques, materials, and forms for the effective expression of significant human emotions and visions. It is abstract in the sense that the artist selects and distills from all available sources the most appropriate physical and psychical materials for his purpose. It is metaphysical and cosmic in the sense of being concerned with the basic truths, values, and intuitions about the order and meaning of reality as a whole. It is religious in so far as it recognizes and enhances belief in a supreme benevolent Power who is the source and continuing sustainer of all things.

Evidently this kind of art makes complicated and unprecedented demands upon the artist himself. He must be a truly great personality. He is called upon to demonstrate the reign of spirit by creating works which awaken the divine potentialities of his observers. The education of artists for such a vocation is now impossible in most art schools without a radical transformation and enlargement of their programs of training.

There is a vague widespread longing that somehow the intellectual powers of man should now be devoted to

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exploring the higher aspects of mind and to solving the enormous social and spiritual problems of our time with the same intensity, efficiency, and devotion as they have been applied to material problems. The solution of these problems requires vision, benevolence, and integrity, as well as lofty intellectual skills. Let us call a person who unites these capabilities a spiritual engineer. I have the strong impression that there is a dangerous dirth of spiritual engineers in those sciences, arts, and religions which are most crucial for our human safety, welfare, and progress. An important kind of spiritual engineer consists of good cosmic artists who are striving valiantly to increase the power of beauty to humanize, elevate, and illuminate mankind. Surely those who realize the serious shortage of such constructive aesthetic engineers can find ways to encourage the development of a large number of new cosmic artists.

CHAPTER V

THE DISCOVERY OF COSMIC ART: AN AESTHETIC CONVERSION

"A work of art is a mist carved into an image."
—Kahlil Gibran, *Sand and Foam*, p. 83.

The idea of Cosmic Art began as a surprising and challenging revelation. This revelation generated in me a feeling of import and compulsion like that of Amos when he exclaimed (3:8), "The Lord has spoken; who can but prophesy?" This aesthetic conversion occurred most unexpectedly during a happy sojourn in Paris in 1920-1921. From studies in two theological schools, I was familiar with religious conversion as a radical re-orientation and recharging of one's whole life. One day in Paris I underwent an analogous transformation in the realm of aesthetic experience. I felt a sudden, overwhelming realization of the wonders, delights, and possibilities of artistic beauty. A multitude of unpredictable consequences of this emotional discovery have enriched every aspect of my subsequent life. Beauty has proved to be one of the most effective and joyous ways of finding oneself, good friends, and God.

It happened in this fashion. I was wandering leisurely through an exhibition of art works by "Independent Artists" in the Grand Palais on the Seine. More than four thousand creations presented an aggregation of discordant qualities, banal and fantastic, messy and masterful, infantile and superfine. Amid this conglomeration of

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ephemeral eccentricities I had no thought of meeting the Eternal. Yet in that bizarre and confusing medley, one work, called *The Infinite*, spoke to me with compelling spiritual authority. I have no written record or photograph of this amazing painting, and none can be found in the Palais files.

This picture, as best I can recall, was about four feet wide and two feet high. Its vivid and rhythmic color patterns instantly captured my attention and invited a sustained contemplation of its charms. The lower foreground suggested a bottomless abyss from which stream-lines of color moved up and over a ledge, like a back-tracking waterfall. These daring bands of color permeated and overflowed the painting. Towards the top they receded into the distance as if to converge at a remote point beyond the frame. It was a simple, obvious, colorful form, designed by a man I wish I knew, which compelled me to feel deeply a grand and difficult concept. A cold, pure thought became incarnate, warm, and glowing before my astonished eyes. It made me tingle, perspire, stand still, linger. I had seen a great light. I was converted.

This aesthetic awakening produced deep and lasting changes in my mind. *I became aware of color.* For the first time in my life I saw, in a kind of expansive explosion, the enchantments, the adventures, the possibilities of colored patterns. Next, and most important, *I discovered Cosmic Art.* I reasoned that if one artist could successfully embody a profound metaphysical abstraction in eloquent pigments, other artists too could objectify their philosophical and religious insights.

I discovered also abstract expressionism. Implicit in *The Infinite* was an obvious aesthetic idea of tremendous importance which I did not correctly evaluate for twenty-

five years. (The chief objection to defining metaphysics as the science of the obvious is that often it takes a man a long time, often more than a life time, to awaken to the obvious!) The creator of that work evidently had selected and combined with sure intuition precisely those color-forms which would perfectly express his vision. Such artistry is the essence of abstract expressionism which, I believe, will continue in the future to be the guiding law in the creation of great metaphysical or Cosmic Art.

The discoveries just mentioned started me on a long, continuing search which has entailed an immense range of fascinating adventure, significant discoveries, and exciting consequences.

Five years after Paris, I encountered in a library the second artistic masterpiece which activated my hunt for the best works of Cosmic Art. It was a photograph of *The Birth of Psyche*, a piece of sculpture, envisaged and shaped from bronze and plaster by one of the greatest contemporary sculptors, Einar Jonsson of Iceland. (See Plate I.) This high relief, nearly eight feet square, consists of a dynamic organism of five interlinked figures. The artist has captured and recorded that moment when the elements of existence focus and unite to give birth to a human soul. The four figures of earth, water, air, and fire contrive together as cooperating arms of a mighty swastika, an ancient symbol of fertility and birth. Each element contributes its proper share to building the form of *Psyche*, who emerges from the center as a beautiful woman and reaches upward toward fire, the element most akin to spirit and a symbol of energy and power.

Bold indeed is any artist who would dare to communicate through bronze and plaster of Paris the idea of the birth of the mind! Yet here that marvel is accomplished

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with clear, decisive, and incredible perfection. One loves to linger on its self-complete rhythms, velvety variations of contour and texture, and concentrated drama. The relief reaches outward but a few inches and yet in this shallow face of inert matter one feels the vocal outcropping of the universal forces of creation. The four major lines of the design lead into the central vortex and at the same time out into the endless. The edges of the piece are bounding planes and margins of the infinite and the invisible. This creation leaves me with the trustful feeling that my mind is happily intertwined within the loving arms of an Intelligent Reality.

CHAPTER VI

AN ORIENTAL QUEST: FINDING GOD THROUGH THE BEAUTIFUL

"The shortest way to oneself is by a detour around the world."—Hermann Keyserling.

In 1932-1933 I was granted a leave of eighteen months from university teaching for a trip around the world. I devoted most of my time to a first-hand study of religion and art in Japan, China, and India. I shall relate one experience in each of these countries which made an important addition to my metaphysics of art.

The first cosmic artist I met in person was a Hungarian genius named Mrs. Sass Brunner, who, with her talented daughter Elizabeth, was holding, in 1933, a large exhibition of paintings in Hyderabad, India. Tremendous, unbelievable, rapturous, was the effect of this, my first massive encounter with Cosmic Art creations of a high order of technical skill and spiritual insight. Mrs. Brunner started to paint at nine years of age. She loved solitude and meditation, and especially enjoyed painting extraordinary natural phenomena. The events of the First World War crushed her sensitive mind, paralyzed her power of painting, and undermined her health, until she saw release only in death. After refusing food for twenty-eight days, she lost her physical capacities but was awakened to a remarkable activity of spiritual consciousness, gained a new desire to enjoy life, and went feverishly back to painting, now, from inner vision.

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She was inspired to leave her home in Hungary, and made her way with her artist daughter to India in 1930 by way of Egypt and the Near East. She spent two years in travel and meditation, to absorb the art, traditions, and amazing multiform life of India. She discovered, as she said, "the all-embracing love in the throbbing of the Earth's great heart." She set to work on many large compositions, with her "mind directed towards infinity," and strove to present "the message of Infinity in the metaphor of color, line, and harmony." Tagore, Gandhi, and many other Indians have testified to her success in interpreting and symbolizing the spirit of India. Some of her subjects are *Light of the Night*, *Four Aspects of the Moon*, *Shiva*, *Jain Victor*, *Cosmic Prayer*, *Nirvana*, *Radiatic View of Cohesion*, *Trimurti* (Trinity), and *Gautama Buddha*. (See Plate II.) Mrs. Brunner is one of the greatest modern mystic painters. The creations and friendship of these two artists were the most powerful influences in the thirties which kept alive my will to carry on the search for adequate and numerous works for a book on *Cosmic Art*.

In Peiping, China, I reveled in the sustained fascination of the spacious areas of the Altar and Temple of Heaven. The outer wall is 18,000 feet long and the inner one, 12,000 feet. The many walls have a paradoxical effect. They seem to be, not barricades, but horizons; they keep spaces clear and open for the mind to move heavenward. The four main original gates were named after the chief attributes of Heaven (Supreme Lord): Gate of Universal Creation, Gate of Luminous Penetration, Gate of Far-reaching Generosity, and Gate of Complete Steadfastness.

I spent many solitary days in contemplating and photographing the exquisite buildings and vistas of these

idyllic precincts. With a profound rightness of intuition, the architects located the constructions, fields, and forests with simple and perfect orientation to distance and emptiness, to stars and silence. (The great ceremonies were celebrated at night, just before dawn.) "The Chinese feeling for the need of voids as amplifiers," declares George Rowley, "remained a characteristic trait throughout their history. . . . Landscape became a visible symbol of an all-embracing universe. . . . A void was never mere atmosphere but the vehicle of the Chi'i spirit." (*Principles of Chinese Painting*, Princeton University Press, 1947, pp. 71, 7, 72.)

Frank Crane called the Altar of Heaven "the greatest religious building on earth." It is simply a circular platform of stone, about ninety feet in diameter and elevated twenty-four feet above the half-forested plain. It is the topmost of three terraces, and the whole structure resembles a low truncated cone. It has no enclosing wall save a protective, open-work balustrade of marble, and no roof save the sky. Pious Chinese called its middle point the center of the world. I stood alone on this central disc one quiet night when the moon sprinkled the marble balustrades and gateways with phosphorescent luster. The openness and majesty of the setting, the glowing indefiniteness of the starry deeps, spoke of a brooding, all-pervading Deity, and invited one to reverential contemplation. In those moments of solitary silence I felt the Divine Presence and an ineffable tranquillity.

That hour was no time for aesthetic analysis but every later reflection on that imposing masterpiece of China has renewed the wonder of its perfect union of form, purpose, and setting. The Altar of Heaven expresses the Taoist philosophy that Tao (Cosmic Reason, World's Mother) is

a formless, invisible, all-pervading infinite, and that its sublimity is most fitly symbolized by spaciousness, the void, or emptiness (sometimes translated fullness). While Gothic builders strove for spaciousness within the cathedral, under vaulted roofs, the Chinese architects utilized the magnitude of external nature, with heaven as its dome. These Chinese builders are a permanent goad to western architects to spend immensely more effort and money on constructing such ample landscape designs as will enhance the spirit and dignity of divine worship.

In Japan, I visited the high southern plateau named Koyasan because my world-itinerant friend, James Bissell Pratt, testified that this Buddhist holy mountain was for him the point nearest to heaven of any place on earth. There indeed I experienced, in complete surprise, the one most massive and ecstatic mystic experience of my life. The broad, remote setting realized complete, tranquil seclusion. The troubled and distracting world was shut out by mists and rainclouds, and by ranges of enveloping hills clothed with rolling forests of cryptomeria trees.

These trees are the incomparable symbols of Japan's holy places, and are themselves a religious experience. First, they calm the mind by their serene and immobile magnitude, which resembles the redwoods, and then they invite to elevated contemplation. Only centuries of rain and sun could produce these immense pillars, and the needle-like leaves are evergreen—two facts which also encourage thought on things eternal. One cannot be intimate with these giants. They are cold and austere. They resist alike pride and photography. They shut out the world, engulf the temple-monasteries, and direct one's thoughts heavenward. They are a memorable spiritual experience.

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One hundred and twenty exquisite temples, forty-nine poetic gardens, and perhaps the most solemn cemetery of the world, crown the plateau of Koyasan. These wonders allure continuous multitudes of pilgrims to creative retreat. My Japanese friend and I were assigned to Ryukoin Temple for entertainment, and taken to the charming little cottage and garden where L. Adams Beck wrote some of her wonderful Oriental books. I asked our host, the genial Head of Koyasan School, to obtain permission for us to witness an initiation ceremony for Buddhist laymen. He responded by arranging instead to conduct us through the ceremony as participants.

The morning of the ceremony was dark and rainy. This condition delighted my companion because he felt that "a dismal day was most appropriate for that gloomy business called religion." His pleasure evidently sprang, as it often does with the Japanese, from aesthetic rather than religious considerations. We climbed the front steps of a magnificent temple. A monk cordially greeted us at a little gate and sprinkled fragrant powder on our hands. Then, across the left shoulder of each of us, he laid a long, narrow strip of cotton cloth. We walked down an extended arcade, passed through a door, and found ourselves with others in a large, impressive hall. At the front, a monk in a gorgeous costume was standing beside a five-foot candlestick, explaining the ten noble ethical precepts of the Shingon sect of Buddhism. My genial host at my elbow translated everything immediately into excellent English.

After the instruction, we were blindfolded with our cotton cloths and directed to stand for a while in a waiting room. Clear, gentle belltones came intermittently from different distances, and occasionally strange exclamations

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emerged from an adjoining room. When it came my turn to advance, an evergreen twig was placed between my forefingers. I was led forward until I bumped into a table, and then I was told to drop my twig before me. At once several men shouted, "Dainichi," and my blindfold was removed. I was surrounded by smiling monks in richly embroidered costumes. The top of the table was covered by a *mandala*, a pictorial chart of Buddhist deities. The monks congratulated me on my good fortune because my twig fell on the colored portrait of Dainichi, their greatest deity, which meant, they explained, that he would be my everlasting guide. There were tinkling bells and incense. The dim candle light made fascinating colors and flickering shadows on the walls. The beamed ceiling seemed far away.

Next we were guided into a long room with a row of exquisite statues of half a dozen guardian deities. We sat in quiet contemplation for half an hour before a superb image of the Eternal Buddha. Once a monk placed for a short time, in the crotch of my joined hands, the *vajra* or diamond thunderbolt, symbolizing the handle of a sword for fighting wicked powers. After an unmeasured period of meditation, I suddenly felt a presence, pressure, or force springing up within my consciousness, in the manner of a wind blowing into a quiet room. I knew intuitively that it was the Divine Spirit permeating my mind. The experience was too overwhelming for reflection or description. I wanted only *to be*. I felt the engulfing benevolence, harmony, beauty, and benediction of God. I knew he was with me and was everywhere. My tranquillity blossomed swiftly into ineffable bliss. I was experiencing the most vivid awareness of God in my whole lifetime. It was with reluctance that I finally yielded to the practi-

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cal necessity of leaving the meditation hall. A monk stamped our white cloths with the red seal of the temple, recorded our names, and after some bright humor, dismissed us.

After long pondering over this initiatory rite, I realized that it was a masterpiece of aesthetic psychology. In it, ethics, art, and religion were inextricably blended into a perfect union. Beauty and holiness were joined in inseparable unity. Neither could have existed without the other. My thrilling mystic experience might not have happened without a setting which combined most of the fine arts and without an attitude of open-minded faith. That beauty could be the final cause, the indispensable antecedent, of a profound mystic experience was to me a revolutionary discovery. I saw aesthetic experience turned from a superficial luxury or amusement into a partner in man's most significant and profound endeavors. It proved to me that artistic creations may provide an important and satisfying way to God.

CHAPTER VII

A COMPARISON OF AESTHETIC AND RELIGIOUS VALUES

"Nothing more nearly approaches the spirit of true religion than the spirit of true art."

—Basil de Sélincourt.

"Artistic exaltation is a secular form of mystical experience."—Irwin Edman, *Four ways of Philosophy*, p. 191.

The preceding experiences stimulated several pertinent questions. Why does a deep kinship exist between aesthetic and religious experiences? Is one of these realms big enough to include the other? Are there basic differences between them? The last question was focal in my first interview in China, with an influential, retired philosopher named Yuan Pei Tsai of Shanghai. He asserted that there is one basic energy, called nature, from which comes all creation, including everything beautiful. He believed that the most useful survivals of ancient religions are the arts which they constructed, and that in the future, fine art, taken comprehensively, might replace religion altogether.

These propositions support the statement of George Rowley that the unique Chinese conception of matter and spirit "meant that art would tend to take over the functions of religion and philosophy and would become the prime vehicle for man's most profound thoughts and his feelings about the mystery of the universe." But, "the Chinese, . . . by not pursuing the nature of spirit to the ultimate of a personal God, never evolved a real religion

in our sense of that word." (*Principles of Chinese Painting*, p. 5.)

Later I undertook a thorough investigation of the questions posed above and part of the results were published in an article on "Religion and Art" in the *Encyclopedia of the Arts*. The publisher of this volume has kindly given me permission to quote from that essay.

"*Kinships*. (1) The closest kinship between religion and art is their common endeavor to reshape the world better to satisfy man's vision and desire. Each demands a more abundant and harmonious life for man, and adds wonder and meaning to the commonplace. Both presuppose an orderly world amenable to their purposes. Both approach life with zest and enthusiasm; are adventurous and creative; require a self-forgetful devotion and concentrated striving; face the risks of failure and result in deeper insight into reality.

"(2) The kinship of religion and art is emphatically proved by their inseparable blend in primitive ritual and festival; here are united at once the seeds of the fine arts and the roots of religion.

"(3) There is also kinship of effects. Aesthetic enjoyment and religious adoration are psychologically similar. Both spring from emotion, live in exuberant imagination, and awaken admiration, reverence, and awe. Both demand free meditation and absorbed attention, and may issue in a feeling of harmony attained, increased vitality, and a liberated and expanding self. Each experience has a kind of immediacy, self-sufficiency, and intrinsic good which one would gladly prolong; and at the height, ineffable rapture, with a sense of finality and incomparable calm.

"*Differences*. (1) The greatest difference between art and religion is that the aesthetic object is a particular

thing present to the senses, whereas the religious object is the idea of a spiritual being of cosmic range. The aesthetic response is impersonal contemplation; the religious, a personal communion. (2) Religion issues in moral demands upon daily living, whereas . . . art is an immediate and present satisfaction. Art seeks an imaginative transformation of life; religion, an actual one. . . . (4) The widespread antagonism between religion and art springs basically from the religionist's fear that the sensuous art creation will monopolize attention, become an idol, and obscure the Invisible Infinite; while the artist, if he is religious, encounters fearful difficulties in representing spiritual conceptions and the Infinite in particular sensuous materials.

"Interactions. The interactions of art and religion are age long and profound. (1) 'Religion is the mother of the arts' (W. E. Hocking). The principal subject-matter and the most powerful inspiration in the history of the arts has been religion. Religious contemplation of nature has produced manifold artistic creations, notably transcendental poetry. (2) The arts serve religion in endless ways. Since art enhances and joyifies human values, it is inevitable that religion should forever call upon the arts to make its values vivid, impressive, attractive, enjoyable, and immortal. To list the arts which have served religion constructively would be to name them all. (3) The religionist who has discovered the secrets of beauty knows that he needs the fine arts for perfecting his worship of the Perfect One. The artist who has discovered the secrets of religion finds himself animated by the most powerful drive to artistic creation. So long as art and religion endure, they will stand in profound need of each other."

CHAPTER VIII

BEAUTY IS ROOTED IN REALITY

"The maker must be either ugly or indifferent or beautiful. If ugly, it would not have made its contrary; if indifferent, why the beautiful rather than the ugly? Therefore, the nature which has fabricated these beautiful things possesses a beauty prior to theirs."—Plotinus, *The Divine Mind*, Fifth Ennead, 8.2, translated by Charles Wallis.

The question, why are aesthetic and religious values similar? finds a deeper, metaphysical answer in the proposition that beauty has its roots in reality, or, in theological terms, love of beauty is an attribute of God.

During my Paris sojourn, I became acquainted with the eminent American philosopher, James Mark Baldwin. He was the first representative I met of a considerable group of philosophers who hold that beauty is the most illuminating and fertile key that we know to the ultimate nature of existence itself. He called his metaphysics *pancalism*, from the Greek: *pan*, *all*, and *kalos*, *beautiful*. He thinks, after the manner of Schelling, that aesthetic contemplation is the best "organ for the apprehension of the real. . . . The ascription of beauty, a reasoned . . . conception of aesthetic quality, is the final form of our thought about nature, man, the world, the all. . . . We realize the real in achieving and enjoying the beautiful." (*Genetic Theory of Reality*, Putnam's Sons, 1915, pp. 302, viii, 227, 311.) "In the realization of truth in artistic forms we experience the ultimate grasp of reality." (Elisabeth Zerbey).

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Baldwin's theory helped to resolve a conflict I encountered in my theological studies. In Boston University School of Theology, I listened to lectures by Henry C. Sheldon in a course based on the book, *System of Christian Doctrine*. The first editions of this book contained no reference to the relation of beauty to God, but in the revised edition of 1912, the author notes that "the divine interest" may be "extended in full measure to the aesthetical domain." This statement appears on page 191 in a footnote in small type, appropriate to a minor afterthought. Later, in Harvard Divinity School, cautious, judicious Dean W. W. Fenn, in a brilliant course called Theism, expounded three major evidences for the existence of God, the implications of truth, goodness, and beauty. The harmonies and ramifications of beautiful things, he argued, compel us to postulate for their explanation a beauty-loving deity. I was convinced, and I felt for the first time that beauty in all its forms is an important and permanent component of our universe. Works of art at their best, therefore, should be indirect revelations of the Artist-creator of all things. Much later I adopted the perfect adjective, *cosmic*, to identify such artistic works.

The evidence for the proposition that the cosmos generates and sustains beauty is abundant and fascinating, but must be reserved for the larger book. This evidence could be marshalled under three heads:

(1) From the history of art. In Helen Gardner's *Art Through the Ages*, 1926, forty-four per cent of the illustrated works of art which are definitely classifiable were inspired by religion.

(2) From the history of religion. Every religion ascribes beauty to deity. Some examples follow. Judaism and Christianity: "He has made everything beautiful in its

time." (Ecclesiastes 3:11.) Thomas Aquinas: "The being of all things derives from the Divine Beauty. . . . Beauty is properly attributed to God, like being, unity, and goodness." (Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938, pp. 124, 173.) Islam: Al-Ghazzali asserts, "The Messenger of God says, 'God is beautiful and He loves the beautiful.'" (K. B. Iyer, editor, *Art and Thought*, London, Luzac, 1947, p. 162.) Buddhism: "Whenever one reaches up to the Release, called the Beautiful, then he knows indeed what Beauty is." (F. L. Woodward, *Some Sayings of the Buddha*, Oxford University Press, 1939, p. 208.)

(3) From metaphysics. Most of the categories which describe existence apply to works of art, such as quality, difference, unity, order, individuality, and totality. Many of the world's profoundest thinkers root beauty in reality. R. W. Emerson: "The question of beauty takes us out of surfaces into thinking of the foundations of things." A. N. Whitehead: "All order is aesthetic order. . . . The actual world is the outcome of the aesthetic order, and the aesthetic order is derived from the immanence of God." (*Religion in the Making*, Macmillan Co., 1926, p. 105.) Sri Aurobindo: "Love, Joy, and Beauty are the fundamental determinates of the Divine Delight of Existence, and . . . of its force of existence." (*The Life Divine*, p. 286.)

CHAPTER IX

AN INTENSIVE SEARCH FOR COSMIC ARTISTS

"The traveller has to knock at every alien door to come to his own, and one has to wander through all the outer worlds to reach the innermost shrine at the end."—Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*, Macmillan Co., 1914, No. 12.

After returning from the Orient in the early thirties, I undertook a limited reconnaissance of the productions of Cosmic Art. I concluded that not enough good relevant works were appearing to justify a large-scale search at that time. The appalling triteness, dullness, and sentimentalism of most religious art was a further deterrent.

During that decade, however, I became acquainted with the works of ten great cosmic artists whose creations had been unfolding for many years before and who stood, and still stand, as mountain peaks in this realm. Their names follow: Nandalal Bose and Mrs. Sass Brunner (India), Lyonel Feininger (Germany and the United States), Einar Jonsson (Iceland), Ivan Mestrovic (Yugoslavia), Kosetsu Nosu (Japan), Nicholas Roerich (Russia, United States, and India), Georges Rouault (France), and the American dancers Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn. I enjoyed the exciting privilege of seeing Mr. Kosetsu Nosu in the process of creating the tremendous murals which ennoble the new Buddhist Temple at Sarnath, India. And instead of having to go to Yugoslavia to visit Ivan Mestrovic, he came to Syracuse University and for seven years has been a most encouraging and inspiring colleague. Of

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these I have met seven, not Jonsson, Roerich, or Rouault.

Then came the confusing, experimenting, warring forties, which yielded a steadily increasing range of superior Cosmic Art. So fertile in this respect was that decade that future art historians may designate it as the dawn of a new and glorious age of metaphysical-spiritual art. Alfred Frankfurter wrote thus in the *Art News* for January 1, 1946, "We are today witnessing . . . a worldwide revival of religious art. . . . And how is this revival occurring? It is occurring spontaneously. It is occurring as though men everywhere felt a need for it. It is occurring because there are not atheists in foxholes."

To corroborate the assertion of Mr. Frankfurter, I shall quote statements made in March, 1947, by three American art critics, and one by a French critic writing in 1950. Florence S. Berryman of *The Sunday Star*, Washington, D. C., reported that "There has been quite a flurry of interest in modern and radical religious art in the past few years. . . . I have seen innumerable examples of religious art by living artists in my weekly rounds of exhibitions, or trips to New York shows." John K. Sherman (*Star and Tribune*, Minneapolis) declared, "We have had countless examples of work which have the cosmic or metaphysical content you mention."

Emily Genauer (New York *World-Telegram*) wrote, "Another development of 1947, again in the line with the artists' obvious new concern with the deeper philosophical and metaphysical meanings of life and their concern with the world's future, is the large amount of religious painting being done. . . . You must be aware of how strong a religious movement there is in the art world right now. . . . I couldn't possibly undertake to list all the individual works I have found. There are

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hundreds. . . . And this is something new in contemporary painting. It was occasioned, perhaps, by the war or the atom bomb, or the general chaos and hopelessness of the world scene. Whatever its cause, it is most strikingly apparent, surely the most startling single development in contemporary art, even . . . an outstanding characteristic in the field of present-day writing."

On the occasion of an exhibition of French art illustrating the first half of this century, Georges Turpin wrote a review of trends for that period which was summarized thus in a Special Number of *La Revue Moderne*, Paris: "The first half of this century will have to be marked by no more than four important artistic movements, and all of the derivative movements which sprang from them. These movements are expressionism, musicalism, constructivism, but it will be known as a renaissance of religious art (*l'Art Sacré*), commenced by Marcel-Lenoir and directed by Desvallières and Maurice Denis."

In 1946 I began my intensive world-wide search for the best examples of metaphysical art created or completed since 1917. My correspondence and reading fanned out as fast as time allowed. In a steadily expanding fashion, suggestions came from friends, exhibitions, art magazines, and 1217 books. Starting with a dozen acquaintances in India, I now have a file of 648 correspondents in that country, 204 in France, 176 in Japan, etc. (Cost of postage alone has reached \$922.) Scores of cosmic artists have been difficult to locate because they work quietly, unostentatiously, and without publicity. The following statistics indicate the results of my search up to March 28, 1955:

Photographs on hand	2014
Original works on hand	62

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Artists represented above	850
Countries represented	64
Photographs left as first selections	
after the eighth culling	354
Artists included in the eighth selection	282
From the United States	147
From outside the United States	135

I have no record of the number of photographs and original works I have examined. I should guess that I have returned fifteen times as many photographs as I have retained. I have visited many hundreds of exhibitions and have interviewed a hundred or more artists. For one short chapter on metaphysical poetry, I have examined up to date 389 volumes of modern poetry. Many of these came from India, where much superlative metaphysical poetry in English is now being written. If you want to enjoy charming friends, get acquainted with cosmic artists. They are wonderful persons, as the continuing surprises of my happy experiences with them demonstrates.

I cannot express as often and ardently as I should like to, my profound gratitude to the thousands of artists who have gladly and generously aided my search and enterprise. At the same time I feel a deep sadness which springs from the three following unavoidable facts. First, it will not be possible for financial reasons to reproduce in the larger book works of more than about one seventh of the artists represented in my photographic collection. Another sorrowful fact is that I have not yet learned the addresses of numerous cosmic artists whose creations undoubtedly deserve a place in the foremost category of excellence. I continue to be eager to hear of their addresses.

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A third sad fact arises from the errors of judgment which will inevitably appear in the final choices even after the most sincere and earnest endeavors to realize objectivity and fairness. In order to attain just judgments I asked five creative artists from five cities to express at different times their critical evaluations. They have carefully examined from two hundred to five hundred of the most promising works. I plan to ask five or more other persons of varying backgrounds to evaluate the main collection before final decisions must be made.

Frank W. Kent, painter and Professor in our School of Art in Syracuse University, spent half a day each week in my office during one college year in order critically to examine and comment on all photographs on hand. I quote now a part of the orientation and estimate which he wrote at the end of that period. "As an artist, I have carefully reviewed every work and edited the selection solely for its aesthetic or artistic merit. Particular stress has been placed upon the development of new creative interpretations of the religious experience, and the scope to this end has exhibited an astonishing variety of creative forms, from the strictly abstract to the personalized or stylized treatment of traditional forms. It becomes my opinion that here is a book which marks a new milestone in collecting and identifying works of art which indicate an inspiring modern affirmation of the unity of art and religion."

CHAPTER X

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF COSMIC ARTISTS AND THEIR THEMES

"Tomorrow's art, I feel, will develop and mature as man rids himself of his own material sense limitations and becomes aware of universal spiritual relationships."—Gerry Peirce, *Creative Thought*.

Several distinctive characteristics of cosmic artists have emerged from my acquaintance with them. (1) *They are little known to each other*. An early and cumulative discovery is that hundreds of these artists, often unpublicized, are struggling with similar themes, goals, and problems of symbolic expression. They are frequently surprised to learn that there exists a widespread, spontaneous surge among artists, working alone in scattered parts of the world, for more satisfying modern symbolizations of man's deepest concerns. They have been striving quietly, in utter sincerity, often under irksome and parsimonious conditions.

In many instances they are unwilling to put up for sale their cosmic creations because they need them more than food and furniture to maintain the bigness and vitality of their consciousness. They may produce a second kind of work for sale, such as landscapes, portraits, or flowers. They seem to like to keep their spiritual children together, close around them, to serve as more concrete, meaningful, and abiding statements of their philosophy of life. Their creations are at once personal and universal, but they usually dislike to unveil the secrets of their sacred treasures, save to trusted friends.

When one of these more or less isolated artists learns that hundreds of other kindred minds are currently engaged in the same quest, he returns to his creative endeavors with new vim and hopefulness. In consequence an extensive, representative, international collection, even in book reproductions, of recent metaphysical art of good quality and modern styles will bring illumination, encouragement, inspiration, and solidarity to large numbers of devoted, seeking minds. Most people just have not seen enough Cosmic Art to appreciate what a multitude of fine works is being produced. Nevertheless, because of the fascinating variety of creations resulting from this relative independence, we can say that the isolation of many cosmic artists has been a splendid and fruitful isolation.

(2) *Many work under inspiration.* I discovered that dozens of cosmic artists create best while intuiting an impulse or influence which seems to spring from a spiritual or divine agency beyond themselves but which manifests and operates in the shoreless depths of their own consciousness. They feel themselves to be the channels, instruments, or servants of a higher power.

Many cosmic artists display in their attitudes and motives an unwitting prophetic quality. They know and treasure the basic desire of the authentic artist for activity and joy in creating satisfying forms of expression. At the same time an integral component of their joy is the spiritual illumination which they have found and embodied in their works. Since their creations have been vehicles for a spiritual expansion of their minds, they hope that other observers may enjoy a like expansion through contemplating their art. This desire is often reflected truly in their feeling that their work may express both beauty and truth.

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Most cosmic artists firmly believe that they have something important to say. They do not want to be professional moralists or preachers, but they are often motivated by a powerful mission or commission to present, to dark, needy, and confused multitudes, spiritual truth in artistic forms that are at once beautiful and revealing. On the whole they are not recluses, but are sociable, modest, and solemnly aware of the problems of our age. They continue to be eager for sympathetic listeners, and are cooperative and responsive when anyone shows a sincere interest in their works and views. They are usually integrated personalities because their lives are a rich synthesis of human activities which blend art, philosophy, and religion.

I have asked two dozen friends to write intimately of what happens within their consciousness at the birthing of an art work. From eight responses I quote the five selections that follow, with the authors' permissions. (While dozens of psychic mediums automatically draw "spirit paintings", I have had small success in locating such drawings that display any technical excellence.)

Faith Vilas is a notable example of a painter who worked under inspiration. She painted with great intensity and speed, but only at those ecstatic moments when all mental and physical conditions united to produce a favorable creative mood. At such a moment she felt a strong urge from an invisible source to apply paint to a canvas. She did not know in advance what the colors, forms, or meaning of the paintings were to be. If a suggestive work did not shape up in ten minutes, she laid it aside for prolonged future perusal. The next creative period might involve another long mental preparation, of meditation, social isolation, and serene waiting.

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Elaine Stevenson Michelsen declares, "Actually what happens is this: I pray unceasingly, and I believe my paintings are the 'overflow' of gratitude to God and his goodness to me. I believe it comes from Him and goes back to Him as inflowing-outflowing praise: 'the Father abiding in me.' God is so near to me that I trust the revelation of Cosmic forms and I feel the enveloping security in the extension of his power, using me as a channel to give to others the closeness of God with his creations. I usually paint to music, and the world's great composers live again to convey their message of insight into Divine harmony in all things."

Painter L. Vladimir Goriansky, trained in architecture in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and in art at Harvard and abroad, characterizes the creative process of the artist as follows. He detects two modes of creation. In the one, the architect, like a musical composer, sits with pencil in hand and invents or modifies one scheme after another in a search for that design which will best solve the problem of the given project. In the other mode, as a painter, he builds upon concentrated meditation, with flights into unexplainable psychic experiences. The fact is that he does try to establish a sense of union with Something of a higher order, not himself, as he searches for the best answer from the within-Selfhood, perhaps also from the unknown "worlds." "Sometimes this endeavor is very painful," he declares; "a constant, spiritual, emotional, and mental strain, culminating in the final stage. Right music helps."

"The next stage is to block out rather in an abstract manner the theme, and then proceed in developing it into a final product. Then, as a critic wrote, 'I paint as one possessed!' Yes, indeed! with an accumulation of intui-

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tive knowledge and soul experience. What a sudden impact! Finally, all at once, behold the result, a plastic synthesis radiating with meaning of unpredictable consequences.

"The real problem of the painter is not merely an intuitive one, once he does become a channel for understanding, knowledge, and art. Like the architect, he must be a true master of medium and technique, and be able to construct an organic plastic design of volume in intuitive space. The last step of the painter's job is to remove the 'dead spots' on the canvas and try to reach the essential form. Then only the design of the picture may reveal to 'the hungry psyche and the ready eye' the Cosmic Relationships, and be very likely charged with Cosmic Rhythm. The artist should not neglect the life and spirit of the Divine Order of Cosmos, which is greater than the galaxies, because it expresses the significant principle of pictorial organism, if not the Divine Realm or the Absolute Reality. The cosmic dimension, I think, is beyond the fourth dimension."

Marjorie Parker: "Inspiration comes to me from the 'One Great Source,' through lovely music, good literature, beauty in the dance, all beautiful color, and flowers. All this, with a plea to the Great Master Angel that governs all Art and Beauty, a prayer to the God of my heart for power, puts me in a highly exhilarating mood to paint Cosmic Art. I am a channel for Him, the master of All Truth and Beauty. Sometimes I sing and dance as I paint, and again I might not be aware of my physical body at all, for I have reached such a high Cosmic Plane."

Shari Martin speaks thus: "I put a canvas in front of me: My attention on IT. Soon white delicate hands resembling birds dart toward me. I'm lifted up. . . Light.

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. . . Ethereal colors surround me. Divine images, glorious truths, give the air a brilliance of everlasting beauty. I'm only conscious of being a part of all this. . . Time is no more. Disharmony has become Harmony. . . Peace pervades all.

"The painting is finished. . . The climax of accomplishment. . . The creation, the oneness of beauty. . . The inner vision is wed with the outer and a great exaltation of oneness pervades me. . . . Then the dreaded time: . . . The leaving. . . The earth begins to close in. I become a separate organism in its struggle for existence. . . Once more Time is. Longingly I look upon my tangible earthly evidence of a divine experience, A PAINTING!

"When I paint, the picture creates itself and I'm only conscious of being an instrument. . . It is not I but the Father within that doeth the work. I'm always surprised when it is finished. It belongs to a part of me and I'm overjoyed. I know Love, a Great Love. . . Then the study period comes and I read the message the picture contains. For a long time afterward I Live, Breathe, and have My Being in the world just created."

Plate III, entitled *Christ Awareness*, beautifully illustrates the mystic inspiration which operates mysteriously and marvelously in the depths of Shari Martin's mind as she paints. She interprets this creation as follows: "In my vision of Christ, I saw him as a radiant light. The symbol at the crown center was revolving at tremendous speed. The pulsating light which I saw inwardly must have an outward center of concentration for the perceiving eye to grasp and contemplate. So the head was painted as the key, to stir the beholder to look within himself and see his own vision of Christ. Every person will see in the

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eyes of the Christ only what he develops within his own understanding. Christ is the doorway to God; therefore, I felt impelled to paint him as a portal through which mankind could enter into the cosmic perfection of the Universal God." To obtain an exact photograph of the original of this painting proved difficult because in three of the four attempts a great intensification of light brilliance and contrast strangely appeared around the forehead of Christ.

(3) *Main cosmic themes.* I discovered also that a relatively small number of subjects are of intense and widespread importance to recent cosmic artists. It is this serious and persevering concern about the big questions of life and death that make them cosmic artists. These themes are quickly determined by looking through my file of seventy-six topics, which contain two thousand photographs, and picking out the thickest folders. The decreasing order of size is roughly as follows:

1. Death and the crucifixion. Early in my search I was impressed by the frequency of the crucifixion theme. Every time I encountered a fresh treatment of this subject, I added a count. After eight years the number has become 493.

2. Birth, motherhood, madonna and child.

3. Creation: the beginning of things, darkness and light, chaos and order.

4. Aspiration, hope, prayer, meditation: the quest for divine aid.

5. Suffering; struggles against basic evils: hunger, oppression, war; quest for escape from bondage.

6. The divine manifestations in nature and man.

7. Prophets, messiahs, saviors, purveyors of love.

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8. Illumination, awakening, mental ascent, mystic union.

9. Future life: visions of a new world order of peace and of continuing life after death.

My file contains a considerable number of interpretations of certain other miscellaneous subjects: space, time, and evolution; the passing show or stream of existence, and the end of an era; energy, the machine, and the atomic bomb; magnificent new temples; resurrection and symbols of the infinite.

The preceding review of the grand themes of Cosmic Art elicits a number of surprises. One is the extensive contemporary interest in the artistic portrayal of the origin, order, and dynamism of the universe. Other surprises result from tracing out neglected subjects. For example, I do not have a single effective expression of fatherhood; fathers are a forgotten theme in art; Adam has vanished. Fine artistic portrayals of love and marriage are very scarce. I lack a variety of adequate works on Christ's face, man as divine image, death as a joyful transition, the law of compensation (karma), and Nirvana. I am eager for better works on any topic.

Against this background of facts, an illustrative definition of Cosmic Art is simple: it consists of all skillful, symbolic expressions of the preceding themes and their nearest relatives. These are the ten master topics on the agenda of metaphysical art: life and death, beginning and end (or, time and eternity), suffering and aspiration, love and light (illumination), salvation and God.

CHAPTER XI

HOW ART CIVILIZES US

"More than anything else in experience, the arts mold our actual life of feeling. . . . Few people realize that the real education of emotion is . . . the tacit, personal, illuminating contact with symbols of feeling. . . . Art is the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling."—Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953, pp. 401, 40.

It seems obvious that an artist would not assume the anxieties of arduous and costly training unless he expected to enjoy his activities and to produce works which he believed to be important. What is *really important* is a difficult philosophical question which multitudes of people, including artists, often answer foolishly, and consequently they may devote their lives to illusory or minor values. What is the ultimate ethical justification for an artist's feeling of urge or divine responsibility to create?

A philosophical solution is the ideal of self-realization. In this concept the term *self* does not mean a selfish ego but a personal or selfic agent possessed both of divine capacities and of social responsibilities. *Self-realization is God-realization in cooperation with one's fellow men.* It is the happiness of Aristotle, the eternal life of Jesus Christ, and the life divine of Sri Aurobindo. Self-realization is the name for the progressive actualization of all those positive values which are needful and feasible for living an abundant life in this kind of world. Hence, the ethical justification or the *goodness* of any human activity

lies in its power to unfold human selves, to facilitate man's spiritual evolution. The quintessence of this power is condensed in the etymological root of *education* (*e + duco* meaning *out + lead*): *to lead forth* or *to draw out* man's potentialities. It is the vocation of the artist to create works that are good in this sense. Yet we must hasten to note that such works cannot fulfill this general purpose without first of all realizing their own unique aesthetic quality of being charming, satisfying, or beautiful.

How specifically do the fine arts contribute to self-realization? By generating or communicating humanizing emotions through attractive expressive forms. Every human value includes an interest, and every interest is rooted in feeling or emotion. A work of fine art in its full significance is the embodiment or objectification of a significant emotion. It is the symbolic expression of feeling in concrete form through skillful abstraction and synthesis. The expansion of values through symbols is the most distinctive mark of man. Man, like his Maker, is a thinker, a lover, a creator. All three of these activities require symbols, and all three are necessary for producing a great work of art.

Art, then, educates our emotions, and this is the chief significance of art in civilization. Indeed, "in the broadest sense, art is civilization" (A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 349.) When a man is called cultured, why do people usually think of his being educated in painting, music, or other fine art? Because of their right surmise that acquaintance with the great arts of the ages establishes in one's character a richness and refinement, a mature humanization of emotional life. Whitehead continues (*Organization of Thought*), "Culture is activity

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of thought, a receptiveness to beauty, and humane feeling."

There are two special and important reasons why we need art to educate our feelings. These two are the paucity of words and the impersonality of science. Our language is badly deficient in words for naming emotions. Our dictionaries add more than a thousand words a year, but most are names of things, of new gadgets, chemicals, etc. Few stand for the multitude of new feelings which modern man develops. Cosmic artists strive to achieve the last wonderful line in the following stanza from Schiller:

"What thou thinkest belongs to all;
How thou feelest is thine own.
Wouldst thou make Him thine own?
Feel thou the God whom thou thinkest."

But feelings are famously transient. How preserve them so that we can recapture them at will? By associating them with permanent objects: ideas, things, or works of art. The special value of Cosmic Arts is that they may embody ideals and realities in permanent formalized equivalents from which we can enrich both our aesthetic and our spiritual life whenever we contemplate them. Thus they keep vividly alive philosophical, religious, and other sentiments which for most people would soon die in the cold and scanty clothing of abstract propositions. "Art bridges the barriers of philosophical analysis by making us feel what we think" (Shari Martin). Works of art, therefore, are indispensable for identifying, expressing, enhancing, and perpetuating important human emotions. We need poems, novels, dramas, paintings, sculptures, musical compositions, dances, and other arts, to symbolize our nameless and fleeting feelings. Man cannot separate

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himself from values without ceasing to be human, but he may change his allegiance from one value to another and he may expand the values he knows.

The second need for fine art arises from the rugged determination of scientists to exclude feeling from their formulations. They insist that their results shall be disinterested, impersonal, purely intellectual, value-free. Their laws must exhibit no traces of the local, emotional, or "personal" situations of the original observers. If they could do the impossible and apply this non-value requirement to their whole lives, they would become unfeeling, reasoning machines, and science itself would die because scientific research demands a tremendous amount of devotion to truth, in short, an emotional and spiritual foundation and drive.

We must keep warning and warning against the most dreadful peril to contemporary civilization. It is that the growing power of material science and technology will destroy their own spiritual foundations and civilization itself before social science and spiritual science can establish their laws in a world community of peace and concord.

The enjoyment of aesthetic and religious values as a complement to truth values is a superlative need of scientists who wish to be whole rather than fractional personalities, and who want to build civilization and liberty on a solid basis. Their professional concern for natural order will supply a subconscious background that will enrich their aesthetic contemplation, especially of works of Cosmic Art.

For attaining integral selfhood, then, we need both the education of the intellect through science and philosophy and the education of the emotions through wholesome

social, religious, and aesthetic agencies. The artistic approach, however, is basic in one respect: the other aspects of life and value lose much of their power without aesthetic refinements in their expression and operation. *Art is the greatest humanizing force in existence, save the daily influence of parents on their children.* Sensitivity to the fine arts enables men to develop that richness of articulate and controlled emotions which marks a civilized man. Without such maturing sentiments, man remains an animal, or an impulsive, immature, fragmentary, or infantile self. The arts should help men to learn to like and to enjoy the right or good things.

Both art and science, however, may be turned to evil ends. *To know* what are good purposes requires an adequate spiritual philosophy, and *to feel* right emotions requires familiarity with good persons and with multitudes of creations by noble artists, that is to say, by artists who live by an adequate spiritual philosophy. The reason one needs to contemplate many art works for his mental growth is the double fact that each work usually focalizes on one emotion, while emotions are numerous and complex. To gain richness and refinement in one's emotional life, therefore, one must be familiar with a wide range of artistic creations.

Further, we may enlarge our appreciation of human values by contemplating many foreign works of art. If these creations manifest moods different from ours, we grow; if similar, we are reenforced, and a feeling of unity with mankind unfolds. The fine arts provide one of the most effective means for building understanding, sympathy, and goodwill among the peoples of the world. "Art is a universal language of the emotions" (Lila K. Piper).

We conclude that the function of significant art is to

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civilize man by humanizing or ennobling his emotions, and to guarantee him an abundance of happiness in the process. The transformations of history and knowledge keep engendering new modes of well-being, new values and new threats to civilization. The artist who is in love with life and sensitive to contemporary moods will strive to create art works which will capture, articulate, and idealize the novel emotions of his age. The special duty and delight of the cosmic artist is thus to symbolize in powerful forms those longings and fears which most deeply disturb his fellow men. Plate IV is an attempt to express a dreadful blend of emotion which is qualitatively new to modern men. I shall leave its fascinating exploration to the reader without further comment.

CHAPTER XII

FIVE PHASES OF ARTISTIC CREATION AND THE NECESSITY OF ABSTRACTION

"In this field of activity [art] the raw material of the objective world is reformed to suit the dictates of human desire until it becomes the most perfect means of self-identification man has ever devised."
—E. G. Suhr, *Two Currents in the Thought Stream of Europe*, p. 371.

The Reveille of the Atom by Bernhard O. Wahl illustrates one variety of abstract expressionism. (Plate IV) This characterization may call forth more mystery than clarity because notions about abstraction in art are widely confused and bewildering. For discerning the nature of fine art, however, the idea of abstraction serves as a powerful microscope. To see its essences is to win illumination that is exciting, and is required for the understanding and enjoyment of modern and Cosmic Art. This light will grow brighter as we unfold the five phases or factors in the production of an artistic composition.

(1) The first condition, obviously, is an artist, an alert and able artist, who wakes up some morning or moment to an alluring image, mood, desire, or motivation which impels him to act so as to articulate and enhance it. This requisite interest or value which initiates and sustains the creative process is the *expressive* or *emotive* factor in art. As Jules Struppeck declares, "Creativeness springs from a deep-seated need for self-expression through communication, and presupposes that one has something important to express" (*The Creation of Sculpture*, p. xi).

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(2) Meanwhile a tingling or itching develops in the artist's fingers, or in his toes if he is a dancer, according to his habituated training. It is the urge to pick up his favorite instrument, to play with a brush, chisel, pen, bow, or other tool, in the faith that he can construct in his chosen material medium a pattern which will objectify his goading emotion. This is the aspect of technique or craftsmanship, of a skillful, unfolding, trial-and-error quest for effective design. Our word *art* itself comes from the French *ars*, which means *skill*. The second phase of artistic creation consists of this *skillful* or *material-technical* requirement.

(3) The composing of any art work evidently needs the selection of appropriate materials, colors, lines, stones, words, sounds, or what not. For the truly liberated modern artist this selection is unlimited save by the demand of fitness. He enjoys the immense and responsible freedom to choose whatever elements of form, act, or idea he can discover in the total universe which promise most aid in embodying the particular feeling which is incubating in his mind. This selective and constructive stage constitutes the *abstractive, formal* factor in art.

The use of the term *abstraction* in contemporary art is on the whole true to its Latin etymology: *drawing out* or *pulling away from*. In this sense science too is abstract because its devotees pull out, from the total world of things and events, that special class of phenomena which they wish to investigate, perhaps living organisms, chemicals, or stars. Even the imitative or realistic artist chooses that segment of landscape or indoor life which he desires to depict. The glory of modern art is its success in freeing artists from the necessities of literal representation and of encouraging them to exploit the power of abstrac-

tion in novel and stirring creations. Abstract art is not a special kind, style, or category of art works. *Abstraction is an essential basis or factor of all art.* The term *abstract* is currently and commonly applied to artistic creations which display an extraordinary amount of shuffling of materials, especially of purely geometrical components. "Good art has always an inner abstract lattice, through which are woven the emotional lines of communication." (John Foote, Jr.)

Every act of abstraction implies a metaphysically colossal rejection or ignorance: the necessary neglect of the rest of the universe, to concentrate on those tiny pieces of being which interest the artist in the passing moment. Such abstraction is needful in art, as elsewhere, because man's range of conscious attention is small and the range of reality is infinite. Every sensation realizes one speck of cognition out of countless billions. "Man must work with abstractions because he has no other choice" (Lester Knorr). An abstract work of art requires the exclusion of what is momentarily irrelevant or diverting in order to secure concentration on what is momentarily important in materials or emotion. Abstraction is the imaginative process of prophetically extracting from an immeasurable supply just those materials, forms, and images which are essential for weaving that organic whole which will most perfectly express the artist's incipient and pressing feeling or idea.

When that emotion has been conquered and concretized into an artistic work, then, one by one, the excluded feelings or ideas may be caught and intensified into other abstract constructions until the principal human sentiments have been captured and incarnated, while new ones keep appearing. Thus the total process of artistic ab-

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straction is not impoverishment but a progressive enrichment of the mind by the purification, focusing, and enhancement, one after another, of particular human values. But always with us is the finitude of our actual consciousness. One of the wonderful ways of escape from this bondage of momentary attention is the cultivated enjoyment of a vast succession of particular works of Cosmic Art each of which adds a cadence of beauty and truth to our treasures of memory and our plan of life. Let us then welcome abstract art as an intrinsic and worthwhile phase of the history of art, and let us find delights in its many degrees and varieties.

(4) Inseparable from the abstract or selective process in artistic creation is the delicate, intangible, and spiritual demand for fitness. A satisfying work of art is a harmony which unites many kinds of fitness. The basic problem of an artist is so to select, master, and organize the components of his composition that they will, as a whole or total tension, symbolize his feelings which *none of the parts could communicate*. This new, emergent supplement to sensation, this potentiality of an artistic creation to stand for and invoke more than its sensory impressions, is the fourth, *symbolic* or *significant* factor in art. This significant factor is the raw drive of the first expressive stage as it becomes transformed into resonant symbols.

Every work of art operates in that powerful realm of human mental functioning called symbolization. A symbol is any kind of object, physical or ideal, which is used or felt in the mind to stand for something beyond bare sensation. Without symbols man's life would be confined, animal-like, to momentary appetite or instant impression. The symbols of language and of art elevate him from brutish mechanism to significant conception, from sensory

bondage to spiritual freedom. Symbols provide those avenues of metaphor and analogy by which we may travel, by imagination and reflection, into remote times, spaces, and spiritual realms. "Symbolism is the embodiment of invisible realities in sensuous form," declared Bernard Bosanquet (*A History of Aesthetic*, 1892, p. 47). "Of all born creatures man, the Lord of creation, is the only one that cannot live by bread alone; he lives as much by symbols as by sense report" (Susanne K. Langer, *Fortune Magazine*, January 1950, p. 44).

Space permits only that brief discrimination among three basic kinds of symbols which is necessary for understanding and enjoying modern art, and Cosmic Art in particular.

(a) *Substitutive* symbols, like most nouns, traffic lights, flags, or the cross, show no resemblance between sign and meaning. They require verbal interpretation, and are of slight importance in Cosmic Art, except poetry.

(b) *Representational* symbols, like landscape paintings and portraits, display similarities of pattern between sign and object. These are of minor importance in Cosmic Art, because they cannot readily answer the question of Isaiah (40:18), "To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare him with?"

(c) *Functional* symbols are physical forms which directly suggest or evoke meanings. They may or may not incorporate patterns from natural objects. They need little or no verbal interpretation. For instance, the New York *Times* on a recent Sunday displayed on opposite pages six paintings of El Greco. These creations immediately stirred in me the feeling of restless dynamism and "spiritual excitement."

It is of basic importance to comprehend how functional

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symbols differ from representational ones. This distinction rests solidly upon the difference between two kinds of knowledge, sensory knowledge and selfic or spiritual knowledge. Representative art celebrates and illumines the world of concrete things, whereas idealistic, essentialized, ideographic, or Cosmic Art reveals the world of mind: of rational order, sentiment, and intuition. Functional symbols comprise all physical forms, usually man-made, which, by their intrinsic patterns, operations, images or associations of whatever kind, summon or evoke selfic values of any kind, whether emotions, ideas, ideals, or spiritual beings. As representational symbols simulate and suggest the patterns of natural objects, functional symbols awaken the self to the feeling or value import of invisible realities, and often also of visible ones. They turn attention from things to selves, from matter to spirit. They are the most potent, stimulating, and enjoyable symbols for Cosmic Art. It is important to remember that *symbolic* includes and means *significant*. The grand and major trend in modern art, from expressionism, cubism, and surrealism up to date, has been to shift the center of interest from outer things to inner desires. This trend is one of the important evidences for the dawning of a spiritual age.

(5) The final stage in artistic creation is the *synthetic* or *organic* stage. A work of art is not completed until the selected materials are imaginatively organized into that harmonious whole which effectively conveys the artist's feeling or vision. Whether the artist borrows few or many details from natural things, these details must be transformed and integrated into the total work so as to produce the emotional impact which the artist desires. "The making of this expressive form is the creative pro-

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cess that enlists a man's utmost technical skill in the service of his utmost conceptual power, imagination" (Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, p. 40). A work of Cosmic Art is that imaginative, symbolic synthesis of sensuous materials and human feeling or vision which at once glorifies the perceptual form and enlivens and illuminates the mind of the beholder.

That the abstract cosmic artist flees from nature or reality into a fanciful ethereal world is an illusion. The truth is that he penetrates nature to a deeper level than sensory appearances and naturalistic art. He reaches down to the metaphysical level of the dynamic, immanent, causal Intelligence which sustains the laws of universal activity and order. "The artist's structural building method is similar to the structural building method of nature," declares Charles Biederman, who believes that he has made a more concentrated effort than any other author to understand the abstracting process in art. (*Art as the Evolution of Visual Knowledge*, 1948, p. 45). Scientific knowledge is possible because of the grand analogy or parallelism between the laws of nature and the thoughts of God. Cosmic artists try to symbolize the thoughts of God in charming sensory forms of fine art which are accessible to all comers. They deeply sympathize with and support the prevailing conviction of contemporary savants that nature is dynamic, energetic, and permeated with reliable laws. Hence, it is Cosmic Art rather than representational art which is thoroughly and genuinely realistic, because it is the art which seeks to interpret and reveal the fundamental realities of nature, mind, and God.

The most remarkable example of a law that links nature, man, art, and God is the concept of rhythm. Rhythm,

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the most indispensable mark of a good work of art, also operates as a governing principle in all other phases of reality, as Herbert Spencer demonstrated in his *First Principles*.

In the amazing book, *The Social Function of Art* (Hind Kitabs, Bombay, India, 1948), from which I shall quote, the Indian sociologist-mystic-philosopher, Radhakamal Mukerjee, eloquently describes the permutations of rhythm in all realms of being. He begins with the simpler rhythms of breathing and heart beat, waking and sleeping, love and hate, and the alternating of the seasons. He continues, "It is the larger rhythms of nature that predetermine rhythm as the significant form in all the fine arts of man. Such forms and rhythms may be called 'sensuous universals' because of their appeal to men of all races and regions. . . . In the metaphysical harmonies of Being and Becoming which man realizes also as cosmic rhythm of matter and motion, life and mind, we have in the ultimate analysis the genesis of art. Thus great art is religious; the fine arts are divine. . . . Psychological theories of art fail here. We are here in the realm of metaphysics, which alone can give us the clue to the essence of Beauty and the art process. . . . The rhythm or concord of Being and Becoming is the summit of artistic and mystical experience." (Pages 118, 134, 121, 122.)

The frontispiece of this book presents a striking example of how a work of Cosmic Art may express the endless rhythms of nature. The sculptor of this piece, Jules Struppeck, writes thus about it: "In my youth, spent in the country, I developed a great love of nature. The first manifestation of form I had of this work was a small wire sketch. This was shortly after reading Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. While de-

veloping the form I was quite aware of a subliminal concept working its way to the surface of my consciousness. I liked the unending rhythmical line. My art is a quest for unity of expression through the synthesis of idea-content, shape, and material. Art consists of man's abstractions through which he 'knows' the universe. Man's purpose is to use and develop his consciousness, to free himself from the finite, to create."

We conclude that a work of fine art, in its common and proper meaning, is fairly characterized by the five causes or factors which operate in its production. These causes yield five properties: expressive-emotive, material-technical, abstract-formal, symbolic-significant, and synthetic or organic. Perhaps the word which most readily stands for all five factors is *synthetic*, or simply *artistic*. If we turn *expressive* into a noun, we may define a work of fine art as a skillful, abstractive, symbolic, synthetic expression of some feeling or meaning of its creator in a concrete or sensuous form.

Cosmic Arts embrace those synthetic creations which aim to make us aware of the larger linkages of the human self with the triple realities of nature, mind, and God. This consummation of Cosmic Art, however, presupposes that the works themselves realize the qualities of aesthetic excellence or beauty. Any observer who wishes may discontinue enjoyment at the end of aesthetic contemplation. But great works of Cosmic Art continue to be incomparable instigations to self-realization because the human self and beautiful things are alike expressions of the cosmic rhythms which forever manifest the Primordial and Universal Spirit, the Cosmic Artist Supreme.

CHAPTER XIII

THE REVOLT AGAINST FRUSTRATING AND FRAGMENTARY ART

"Ye shall be creators without a creation, ye shall work and know no payments, ye shall be as spiders spinning webs of clay breaking of their weight ere the morning sun riseth!"—*The Golden Scripts*, published by Soulcraft Chapels, Noblesville, Indiana, 2nd edition, 1951, p. 56.

The Hungry Eye represents the dissatisfaction of hosts of persons with the accumulations of current art which are needlessly fragmentary, baffling, and spiritually empty. These persons know that too many artists are offering people stones when they ask for bread. I have seen a multitude of works that seem uncompleted, indeed quite raw, even positively putrid and repulsive to aesthetic taste. Since it would be unkind to name particular purveyors of these unappetizing victuals, I shall put down some phrases which suggest the bewildering varieties of recent fractional art and artistic bankruptcy: geometrical models, dehumanized skeletons, white planes, technical swaggers, sense drummers, egotistic novelties, pseudo-machines, drip-drop accidentals, idiosyncratic symbolisms, enigmatic splurges, infantile splashings, phantasmagoric daubings, and "titillating technical gimmicks."

Our examination of abstraction in the previous chapter proved that certain limitations are inherent and necessary in artistic creations. To create is to limit and define, to make concrete and individual. The artist's peren-

nial problem is to choose limitations which enrich rather than stultify aesthetic and other spiritual values. It is easy to classify the chief kinds of artistic fractioning. These classes consist of the exaggerations that are characteristic, respectively, of the five phases or factors of artistic creation. Since each phase has its peculiar charms, an artist easily falls in love with one aspect and forgets that an adequate artistic work is a finely balanced blend of the five components. When he overweights one and reduces the rest, he joins that overcrowded fraternity of fractionists who today obscure and obstruct the understanding and enjoyment of art.

A bare and partial list of art fractionators must suffice here. In each group there are borderliners and extremists, exaggerators and reducers, who use too much or too little of a needful factor. They spoil their cakes by overdoses of salt, sugar, soda, or some other necessary ingredient. Fascinating examples of the following specialists keep appearing in the art exhibitions. These fractionators are derived from the factors of:

(1) *Expression* (pertaining to impelling emotion or worth): sentimentalists, crude exhibitionists, novelty hunters, rhapsodists, some romanticists, moralists, and ice-bergers.

(2) *Skill* (techniques of creation): technical adepts and critics who become so addicted to means that they forget ends, and conceal or ignore human values: technical playboys, stunsters, mechanists, bunglers.

(3) *Abstraction* (selecting and building form): copyists, naturalists, formalists, constructivists, nonobjectivists, purists, voidists.

(4) *Symbolism* (modes of communication): literalists, illustrators, symbolists, occultists, obfuscators, mutists.

(5) *Synthesis* (degree of unity in variety): homogenizers, simplifiers, muddlers, mongers of chaos and confusion; syncretists of unassimilated complexities.

Several painters have reached the feasible limit in the variety of life's aspects which can be integrated into a single plastic composition. The two daring examples within my knowledge are *Lord, Don't Play with Our Hearts* by Gabor Peterdi and *Prakriti-Maya (Creative Evolution)* by Alice Boner of India. Such works strain the unity of aesthetic response by splitting attention and inviting intellectual analysis of their sundry components. Yet, after such an analysis, one may return to aesthetic contemplation with a deep, dim philosophic sense of the complexity, risks, and grandeur of existence. When that result happens, the artists have indeed been successful.

If artists could resolutely recall, during reflective intervals, that a full-flowered work of art is an integration of five factors, they might avoid some of the lopsided creations mentioned above. Then observers could find clearer paths through the masses of modern art without being lost in a byway. My teacher, William Ernest Hocking, has written, "When a person is lost, it is not because 'he does not know where he is'—he always knows that—but because he does not know where the rest of the world is, the points of the compass, the wider landmarks of the region. Every spot, without its 'bearings,' is a lost spot; every part, without its whole, is a lost part." (*Preface to Philosophy: Textbook*, Macmillan Co., 1946, p. 413.)

Art in which form is the focus of affection, in which geometrical gyrations are the chief joy, may be called morphotic art (from Greek *morphe*, *form*). The common term, *nonobjective*, is awkward, negative, and misleading. Works of nonobjective art cognitively are more ob-

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jective than other kinds because they emphasize the weight of external sensuous pattern, and because they are intended to exclude the sentimental associations of familiar things in the same "objective, disinterested" way as the scientist does. The terms *nonrepresentational* and *non-figurative* are even more clumsy and inept because they involve the two false assumptions that the business of art is to represent natural objects accurately, and that the business of art is to avoid all patterns derived from nature.

I sympathize with lovers of morphotic art because it has its own peculiar, though limited, formal allurements, and because it may express, indirectly and facilely, some important moods of modern man. For instance, it symbolizes to me the progressive mechanization of life through the extension of technology, since technological machines presuppose a host of geometric designs (vectors, atomic diagrams, blue prints, etc.) which may have at once intrinsic charm of pattern *and* suggestions of existential order, perhaps sometimes even hints of the Cosmic Geometrizer. Geometrical art thus echoes a host of those orderly laws of our dreadfully dynamic world which we must control if we are to survive.

When these echoes, however, are too faint for our ears, or when we are weary from the day's business, we may derive delight from the sheer color richness and linear symphonies (when they are present) of manless, morphotic art. I have three nonobjective paintings in my living room which I enjoy when I have no energy for full creative response. Then I love to sit before them and dream. Day-dreaming is good for me sometimes. When paintings are thought blanks, they encourage that thoughtless relaxation or mental silence which is requisite for the upsurge of creative ideas from unconscious intuitive

sources. When their feeling quality is calm, they provide the tired worker with windows of tranquillity, which our grandfathers found in peaceful Hudson-River landscapes.

I find morphotic art, however, inadequate as a full diet. It serves as a pleasant appetizer for dinner, but I should go away hungry if other kinds of nourishment did not follow. While such art is useful in its setting and season, it fails to satisfy the hunger of millions for more meaningful and spiritual art. The expansion of other kinds of art, more solid, synthetic, and significant, is now of urgent importance for advancing man's aesthetic enjoyment and self-realization. I can find no sufficient reason for ejecting all patterns of natural objects from the vocabulary of artistic creation. Susanne K. Langer declares, "Abstract form as such is not an artistic ideal. To carry abstraction as far as possible. . . is a logician's business, not a painter's or poet's. In art, forms are abstracted only to be made clearly apparent, and are freed from their common uses only to be put to new ones: to act as symbols, to become expressive of human feeling." (*Feeling and Form*, p. 51.)

There is one natural structure which cannot be dropped from art without an immense and irreplaceable loss, and that is the human figure. I am forced to this conclusion after extensive investigation into the nature and difficulties of artistic symbolism and communication. It is confirmed by the success of the arts of the drama and motion picture. For the expression of emotion, the attitudes and activities of human bodies are likely to continue, to the end of earth's life, to be the most potent and revealing of all artistic symbols. "There is no more powerful emotional stimulus than the sight of emotion in others. . . . The source of this stimulation is fundamentally instinc-

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tive. . . . We respond to drive emotions by a sort of sympathetic vibration." (Stephen C. Pepper, *Principles of Art Appreciation*, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1949, p. 131.) The only alternative is to exile emotion and to become pure logical machines. Is that what morphotic artists really want to happen? Huntington Hartford thus complains, "I am frankly bitter against those who encourage obscurity in painting—bitter because the kind of warped thinking which creates it is one of the prime movers in the current dehumanization of the arts. . . . I am bitter, most of all, against the critics for either their utter irresponsibility or their auto-hypnosis—I have been unable to decide which—concerning modern art." ("The Public Be Damned," *American Mercury*, March, 1955.)

Wassily Kandinsky has asserted, "The acute angle of a triangle in contact with a circle is no less effective than the finger of God in contact with the finger of Adam in the painting of Michelangelo." After earnest striving to fathom what kind of effectiveness deserves this eulogistic analogy, I end in complete failure and darkness. I conclude that the proposition is simply false in the light of any fair philosophy of art and life. It is reassuring and hopeful to read the words of many critics concerning recent exhibitions to the effect: "I discern a return to man."

Of course one may elect to become a morphotic ascetic through self-will and stern, prolonged discipline, but for what purpose or advantage? One would not choose to live on potatoes and water without being assured of valuable benefits that could not be obtained from a more agreeable menu. The monkish flight of nonobjectives from this amazing and beautiful world requires far stronger aesthetic and ethical justification than is now anywhere

apparent. Just as formless feeling is only the seed of fine art, so feelingless form is its husk or cob.

The extensive production and promotion of morphotic art in recent decades has exercised an unwholesome effect on the development of art. This tendency harms both artists themselves and public interest in art because, for one reason, it fools them into thinking that it is adequate art, "the art of tomorrow", the only kind of good art. For the man of the street morphotic asceticism is a complete enigma. He does not like to think that the artists who invent these fantastic works are crazy. Yet when he can find no good reason for their exclusiveness and when he feels the poverty of human values in it, he is not informed enough about art to know that he is right. There is no good reason to regard morphotic art as the only great and adequate kind. When people do not understand its nature or purpose, they feel baffled, ignorant, or inferior, and therefore they avoid it rather than appear foolish to those who may know. In consequence a lot of people are disgusted with meaningless, enigmatic, manless, morphotic art. Let decorators use it if they will—but many do not because they are afraid that mystifying works will befuddle and annoy their clients. Walls then are left bare of significant works, and hearts, too, lose the delights which more spirit-filled creations could impart.

Several causes make artistic works appear mystifying. The next work we encounter, good or bad, will of course be novel; at least we want and expect it to be novel, for that is one strand of genius and joy in great art. Novelty, however, may not be supported by quality. It may be so extreme as to seem utterly opaque and meaningless. Let us not, however, flee in frustration from opacity, but fearlessly hunt for a few of its provocations.

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A work may be murky because of the technical or symbolic failure of the artist. He has failed to create forms that will communicate his vision, or he has no vision to communicate, or he may be seeking public attention by deliberate obfuscation, or he simply wishes to be meaningless, as illustrated by the following words of a well known artist, "I don't want to show anything, or to teach anything. I've resisted learning all my life, and I don't propose to start teaching others now." (*Time*, August 30, 1954, p. 58.)

On the other hand, a work of art may suggest a lurking profundity which invites sustained contemplation. Then we look again and again, sleep, think, talk, and return, and perhaps end by discovering revealing depths of emotion, insight, and beauty. We learn that great works of art do not dry up quickly, but are endlessly suggestive to the sensitive beholder. "Art never shows itself wholly or finally to any beholder" (Jacques Barzun, *New York Times Book Review*, March 6, 1955, p. 1). We learn, also, without resentment or discouragement, to pay the costs and risks of drilling some wells in the field of art which end in dry sand.

Some of the extravagances and penuries of abstraction need a little further evaluation. I am advocating the use of *abstraction* to fit its etymology. When that original sense is applied to a work of art, it covers the necessary process of selecting building materials. This process is characteristic of every kind of artistic composition, whether in music, painting, poetry, or elsewhere. It is as valid for a preferred landscape as for a nonobjective construction.

Nonobjective or nonfigurative painting is that restricted kind of abstraction in which the artist deliberately refuses,

for his own special reasons, to choose any patterns from given nature. It is both confusing and untrue to the intrinsic idea of abstraction to identify it with nonobjective art as is commonly done. This identification falsely limits abstraction to the love of a special kind of artistic structures. "The absorption of ultra-modern painting with technical devices and effects . . . is as if one should concentrate, in the study of a poet, on his meter and rhymes rather than on what he has to say or [what] his epoch has to say through him" (C. R. Morey, *Art Digest*, December 1, 1943, p. 25).

On the other hand, my frustration may spring from inner causes. I, the observer, may not be sensitive, taste-trained, and alert. Then opaqueness means simply my poverty of apperception, my dullness to aesthetic stimuli. My prison of biases may be built of any combination of twenty-five varieties of stones, too many to list here. Insensitivity is perhaps the most common cause for the appearance of opacity in modern arts. I may find some cheer, however, in the fact that dullness of perception may be sharpened by various training measures. A few of these will be presented in Chapter XIV.

But let us not dare to excuse ourselves by slovenly taking refuge in the antique slogan, "There is no disputing about tastes." This principle is unreliable for two obvious reasons, among others. The first is that my present taste, in the light of future cultivation, may prove to be narrow and mediocre. The words of Keats remind us of a pertinent truth about "a thing of beauty. . . . Its loveliness increases." A second objection to the formula is that it denies any difference between good and bad taste. It implies that the evaluation of an artistic ignoramus is

just as good as that of a sensitive expert who has profited by long critical experience with the arts.

There is one obstacle to aesthetic delight which in this age of scientific imperialism is peculiarly widespread, obstructive, and respected. That hindrance is a monocular devotion to scientific research. An acquaintance of mine, a medical scientist, inherited some choice paintings, and exercised himself much to learn their history. It did not once occur to him that he had the right to sit down and enjoy them. He never did. He couldn't. He didn't know how.

The scientist, as a professional expert, must inevitably analyze, classify, reduce to elements, trace histories, specify environments, and defend abstract formulas. This scientific analysis which works upward from the parts is mentally antithetical to the aesthetic attitude which, first and last, contemplates wholes. It is the latter quality which makes aesthetic experience akin to religious and philosophical approaches. The scientist seeks information rather than inspiration, understanding rather than feeling, and ultimate units rather than consummate oneness. Fortunately, nobody has to focus all his consciousness on precise analysis all the hours or days of his life. The scientist himself, by a mighty campaign of self-endeavor, may learn to pass from splitting atoms to beholding aesthetic wholes—with power perhaps to contemplate five minutes without analyzing.

As we become aware, one by one, of serious defects in artistic creations, we may experience a transition from saying "I am bewildered" to asserting "That is nonsense," or "That is a hopeful effort." Then we are happily liberated from feelings of inferiority, perplexity, and skepticism. On the other hand, if the obstacle turns up in our

own biased or immature attitudes, we must pray and strive that the saying "I am dull" may become transformed into "I am sensitive."

If one wishes to become a fairly complete and joyful personality, he must take mental possession of a wide range of values, including the appreciation of significant art. Stop not, however, at a few cosmic works since the facets of reality and cosmic perspectives are numerous. If a newcomer to the house of Cosmic Art is to become fully awakened from aesthetic lethargy, he needs to contemplate several hundred works and utilize the best available sharpeners of sensitivity.

Also, stop not at works of art which are fragmentary in design or in other respects. Just as there is no one panacea in medicine, there is no synthetic capsule of value in which are condensed the extracts of all good things. There is no ordinary human experience of which we can say: this is the quintessence of happiness and I want nothing more than its eternal prolongation. The abundant life consists rather of a rich and varied succession of particular experiences of many kinds of positive value through a long period of time, *and the same principle is true in the realm of aesthetic enjoyments*. Just as there are many ways to God, there are many ways to beauty. For myself, however, I like best Cosmic or spiritual fine arts, and I have committed myself to exploring, expounding, and recommending them.

There is a steady and growing swing of popular interest and demand toward that new kind of serious art, neither impersonal nor mere form-play, which is synthetic, humanized, cosmic. More and more people find that synthetic art is really what they want because it meets their deepest aesthetic-spiritual needs. They yearn for

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creations which reveal a sincerity, self-reliance, and faith which springs from hearts of high spiritual development. They have an inarticulate hunger for artistic works that satisfy the whole mind, that manifest more solidity of human worth, and a greater wealth of consciousness, than morphotic inventions.

CHAPTER XIV

SOME CUES TO THE ENJOYMENT OF COSMIC ART

"In every object there is inexhaustible meaning; the eye sees in it what the eye brings means of seeing."—Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, I, 5.

I sympathize happily with lovers of classical and conservative arts who find pleasure and mental repose in contemplating creations well loaded with familiar objects and time's approvals. Even the master philosopher, Aristotle, referred aesthetic delight to the recognition of familiar likenesses. But we also love the adventures of novelty. We like to rest and we like to run. Deep in our instinctive nature originates the vitalizing, paradoxical polarity of attraction and repulsion, operating here between the familiar and the strange. We have a double craving: for association with well known things and persons, and for the spices of novelty. We know well that too much of the new produces homesickness and too much of the old breeds boredom.

Lingering with established order is easy but establishing fruitful correlations with the new demands resolute effort and definite discipline. The purpose of aesthetic discipline is to increase our power and freedom to enjoy the chief varieties of artistic and natural beauty. This freedom or "aesthetic habit", like any other skill, such as the skill of making a good cake, good golf stroke, or good typewriter, is the outcome of sustained and intelligent training. And the ancient law of effect holds: do little,

gain little. Let us, therefore, undertake serious endeavors to invigorate our responses to the fine arts. Aesthetic appreciation itself is a kind of art, and a happy one to pursue.

The attainment of aesthetic freedom requires three stages. The first is to affirm and hold fast to the philosophical conviction that it is important to improve one's appreciation of art. The next step is the negative process of liberating ourselves from hampering fears and biases. The third step is the development of positive, fruitful attitudes in the appreciation of great works of art.

In learning to enjoy Cosmic Art, we keep our philosophical bearings by reference to the map of artistic creation in Chapter XII. For the appreciative approach to a work of art, its most important property consists in the potentialities of its symbolic pattern to summon forth form delight and significant responses in any sensitive beholder. If the work is fairly successful, it remains a permanent invitation to contemplation, exploration, and mental expansion. The contemplator activates the potentialities by building his own perception and interpretation of the work. Interpretation is the art of mastering the sign language of human values and of translating and converting them into one's own living experience. The experience which the observer unfolds may or may not resemble the artist's experience. What is important is that the work invoke significant intuitions and feelings in the beholder.

The spirit of joyous freedom operates in aesthetic response. I once asked my students in aesthetics to write their impressions of a certain print. I reported to the artist that seventeen views were expressed. He replied, "I am disappointed. That piece is worth a hundred interpretations." In aesthetic contemplation one does not

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converse with the artist but one "listens" directly to the work itself for whatever feeling values it may show, reveal, or suggest to him. The one inclusive and indispensable qualification for understanding and enjoying art is responsiveness—effective, responsive contemplation.

In contemplating abstract modern art, it is important to remember that it is mentally distilled art, mind-radiating rather than thing-focused. Art is necessarily abstract because it involves selection throughout by a self, and therefore reflects the interests of the artist. How much "vital import" it radiates depends at once upon how richly the artist has endowed his patterns and how sensitively the beholder reponds to its perceptual symbolism. Since a work of Cosmic Art has normally grown out of intense mental activity, it invites dynamic response and spiritual unfoldment.

In a fine work of Cosmic Art the perceptual configuration promptly engages the contemplator in symbolic excursions. It is a portal from a sensuous to a supersensuous realm. This portal has a peculiar property, however. It remarkably resembles a door on a stage which the audience can see all around and through. It is not a gate in a high wall that separates two fields, but it unites them in a larger landscape. It is like a certain gate on the steep slopes of Taishan, China's ancient holy mountain. This gate is marked "Last Horse Gate" because beyond that point even emperors had to dismount and proceed afoot, but what swift and magnificent enlargements of view ensue! The successful viewing of a superior work of Cosmic Art is like ascending in a helicopter. One stays attached to the machine but his perspective expands immensely.

"Appreciation in the broadest sense is the liking of things for themselves. It is having vivid pleasant experi-

ences" (Stephen C. Pepper, *Principles of Art Appreciation*, p. 3). Aesthetic delight possesses its own special quality which cannot be reduced to intellectual, religious, moral, or any other type of value. "*The aesthetic emotion is that unique feeling of pleasure or satisfaction which occurs when one contemplates the perceptual aspect of things, particularly the relational aspects*" (Hunter Mead, *An Introduction to Aesthetics*, Ronald Press Co., 1952, p. 53).

Contemplation is the distinctive condition and core of aesthetic emotion, and is a common experience for normal people. It has many degrees of intensity and concentration, from a transient glance to prolonged ecstatic absorption. It is more a way of feeling an object than of thinking it or acting upon it. A lover of beauty approaches an artistic creation much as a religious devotee approaches the image of his deity, with the expectation of receiving joyful blessings. The art lover waits before an object of art with all its apparent and attractive individuality and versatile suggestiveness, its conformation, rhythm, and symbol, in the faith that through alert perception and lively imagination, he will move, in his stream of consciousness, into that immediately satisfying experience called aesthetic emotion or the experience of the beautiful.

We are trying first to grasp the meaning of aesthetic experience in its most distinctive and pure form, such as a strict morphotic artist might seek after. For him it is the direct, pleasing apprehension of a sensuous pattern without any associative interest whatever. The contemplation of some exquisite decorative creation, like an oriental rug or a lace table cover, easily develops this kind of delight. I remember vividly the profound impression of

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beauty which seized me when I encountered the delicate geometrical designs of the moldings which adorn the vestibule of Angkor Wat in Cambodia.

Let us suppose that we have conquered that mortal enemy of aesthetic experience called form-blindness, and have progressed in the art of enjoying perceptual configurations for their own sakes. Can we reduce all aesthetic experience to this pure pleasure in decorative conformations? The answer is an emphatic *no* because an immense realm of *significant art* exists. Significant art means art that embodies import, theme, or associative factors which may enrich aesthetic experience without subordinating or removing the factor of form-sensitivity. This larger response has been well named "artistic experience" (Hunter Mead). It persistently requires and includes, however, that minimum of aesthetic form-awareness just described. The higher varieties of aesthetic enjoyment which activate larger portions of human personality will be set forth in the final chapter.

Several associational factors often do push aside or conceal basic form awareness. We must next win the battle of liberation and detachment from practical, scientific, "personal," and other interests which obstruct genuine artistic contemplation. Practical detachment means dropping the ordinary concerns and urgencies of daily life. It requires pausing in all manipulation of causes for any useful ends, whether making good bread, a good sale, a good refrigerator, or anything else. It is a deliberate shifting away from the stresses and struggles of solving problems and seeking results. Contemplation requires us to stop overt action and tranquilly look at, or listen to, an artistic work or other attraction for the sake of en-

joying whatever beauty of pattern and meaning may be embodied in it.

Every kind of art offers its own device for encouraging practical detachment. Examples are the elevated stage of a theater, the frame of a painting, or the pedestal of a sculpture. The instant one's attention, for example, moves into a picture frame, he no longer treats the objects inside it as actual things or copies of things, but as tenants of an imaginative realm which call for meditation rather than for action. One does not set his watch by any clock in a painting or in stage scenery. The stimuli of taste, touch, and smell are poor materials for fine art because we cannot push them far enough away from our sense organs to gain the psychical distance or detachment which is necessary for undisturbed, non-practical contemplation.

"Personal" or emotional detachment is another difficult transition to aesthetic experience because it means a complete suppression of one's dear ego and the exclusion of precious sentimental indulgence in personalizing things. This disengagement calls for such an absorption in a presented configuration that self-conscious references and egotistic desires cannot sneak into the field of attention. In aesthetic enjoyment one's feelings may be strong but they are not recognized at the moment as being one's own. A listener who is so concentrated on dramatic action or a symphonic passage that he ignores personal discomfort demonstrates several kinds of aesthetic liberation. The difficulties of disconnecting scientific modes of thinking from artistic contemplation were discussed in Chapter XIII.

The main varieties of aesthetic detachment are beautifully summarized in the two following quotations. "To

appreciate without the itch to acquire, to love without longing to possess, to contemplate with joy and satisfaction but without thought of social advantage, economic gain, or practical exploitation: this is to achieve the disinterested attitude which is fundamental to the aesthetic mood" (Hunter Mead, *An Introduction to Aesthetics*, p. 18). "Contemplation from the outset breaks asunder the texture of practical interests which fasten us to things; it is a negation of utilitarian life and a forgetfulness of self. Art breaks the veil that masks aesthetic reality, which is always fabricated and elaborated by the mind." (Henri Delacroix, *Psychologie de l'Art*, pp. 67, 80-81.)

Aesthetic contemplation is neither inert, unfeeling, unknowing, or instantaneous. It is marked by several notable positive properties. It engages the will; it is active, alert, eager attention. Feeling is integral to artistic experience, but not raw, self-conscious, saccharine, or passionate emotions. Aesthetic emotion must spring from absorption in the unique pattern of the perceived work and its functional meanings. "The 'aesthetic emotion' is really a pervasive feeling of *exhilaration*, directly inspired by the perception of good art" (Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, p. 395). Contemplation is also cognitive or knowledge-yielding because it brings the observer a direct intuitive acquaintance with the form, feeling, and import which may be incarnate in the presented work. Further, contemplation develops in an imaginative realm distinct both from the dream world and from the practical world. The passing of time is a needful factor in contemplation, to allow for fully perceiving the artistic work and to let the proliferating experience grow into a meaningful whole or harmony.

What can those disconcerted and disappointed people

do who wait hopefully before scores of artistic works which leave them cold? When faithful contemplation yields no fruits, one must exercise the zeal of a Buddhist monk, to keep on looking, striving, and exercising compassion. If an inane work has a title, the persusal of that might guide to a response of minimal pleasure. One's zeal may be nourished by the thought that rewarding works do exist and may be found by more diligent search. One's disappointment may be mellowed by the benevolent consideration that the next visitor may have a disposition to enjoy what one finds boring or repellent. One's zeal may be strengthened also by adopting the Stoic rule which Syracuse inhabitants apply to their weather: enjoy what is good and ignore the rest.

Aesthetic enthusiasms are contagious, and friends grow through mutual stimulation. Hence, when you visit an art exhibition, take along a couple of congenial friends who may find and communicate pleasure in works which leave you indifferent. Characters like the following make exciting gallery companions: an utterly naive person, a humorist, a mystic, a philosopher, an alert youngster, a mathematician, a poet, artist, or art critic. We are likely to develop our artistic taste by associating with persons who are more sensitive in some respects than we are. When a friend in Indo-China declared to me that durians, a kind of fruit unknown to me, have a captivating flavor, I had to sample one at the first opportunity. While I think durian taste is terrible, I should not have found the delicious custard apple of India had I not been eager to explore new fruits. A considerate companion, of course, will not rob you of those creative intervals of silence which are necessary for appropriating the aesthetic values of exhibited works. Thus it is good to respect that basic

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law of spiritual evolution (the principle of inclusive experience) which affirms that the man who has critical experience of $x + 1$ values is a safer and surer judge and guide than a person who knows x values.

Artistic experience exists when an appreciative mind is agreeably absorbed in a charming created form. It is a dynamic harmony of pleasant and significant contemplation which is often called the experience of beauty. In the enjoyment of beauty $1 + 1 = 3$ because the mode of interaction and union between object and self adds the third factor of a wonderful new intuition of an integrated whole. Beauty thus requires at least three components: a patterned object which attracts reconnaissance and contemplation; a responsive mind which is capable of enjoying it; and a satisfying interpenetration or interglow between the mind and perceived object. And as the mind dwells upon the unified variety that is manifest, it attains feelings of equilibrium and repose. A rich new emotional life freely develops which is circumscribed only by the moment's own delight and illumination, and is not adulterated by any self-conscious or egotistic desires. At the highest level of beauty we achieve a self-complete experience, a taste of finality, and live for a while amid a perfection which we would gladly prolong.

CHAPTER XV

EXPANSIONS OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE: THROUGH ART TO GOD

“Art is the purest means to attain and become one with the Divine.”

—The Mother, Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

“My mind transfigures to a rapturous seer.”

—Sri Aurobindo in *Savitri*.

A variety of imposing and adventurous advances in the spiritual life spring from several kinds of perfections or expansions of aesthetic experience. Expansion here emerges from minimum aesthetic experience, from delight in pleasing pattern, and finally culminates in the most complete experience known to man, mystic union. Expansion proceeds by artists endowing their perceptual creations with more potentialities for invoking significance or import in alert beholders, and by beholders developing sensitive minds.

Artistic creations fall roughly into the three vast classes or types which follow. These groups have no fixed boundaries because the same work may be classified differently according to the particular attitudes of the observer.

(1) *Instrumental art* consists of constructions which are primarily and deliberately designed to promote any value except intrinsic or formal beauty; for example, automobiles, refrigerators, water pitchers, flags, fur coats, advertising pictures, etc.

(2) *Morphotic art* celebrates delight in pure form, without any external purpose. An artistic configuration is

pure when its pattern suggests no borrowings from either natural objects or personal associations. The frontispiece illustrates beauty of pure form and also significant form.

(3) In *significant art*, form and import are wedded in a balanced and satisfying unity. Plates I to V illustrate this kind of art. The intent of the artist and the structural pattern are fused into a single plastic and pleasing whole. In this process of "symbolic transformation" we know that a fresh synthesis of symbols, conscious or unconscious, often surprises artist and observer alike by becoming a more stimulating, revealing, expansive, and alluring whole than any part alone could be.

"The greatest works," declares Hunter Mead, "are those in which much else [besides form] is also integrated and fused. The larger the number of separate elements successfully unified in a single work, the wider the variety these elements possess, and the more meaningful their individual significance, the greater will be the resulting work. Thus when any work—be it a picture, a novel, or a symphony—has a rich content of associational values, as well as satisfying material and formal values, it is greater art than one possessing only the latter." (*An Introduction to Aesthetics*, p. 286.) It is convenient to call this culminating principle in the ideal of beauty the principle of amplitude.

The intrinsic limitations of instrumental and morphotic arts prevent them from realizing the principle of amplitude, and, therefore, they cannot play a comprehensive role in the process of man's self-realization. And there is one other statute of artistic limitation of tremendous influence upon man's cultural development. It applies to the large family of non-literary arts, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, etc. It states that the only kind of art

which can approach complete amplitude of power in symbolizing and communicating the maximum of man's experience of reality in a single work is literary art. Such a fullness would be more or less exemplified in any one of the major epics of world literature.

The expanding or deepening delights in contemplating various beautiful objects pass roughly through the following stages. These steps have no distinct psychological boundaries but overlap extensively. The level of contemplative consciousness depends at once upon the sensitivity and attitude of the beholder and upon the character of the object. A provocative parable of sensitivity appears in John 12:27-29, where different persons in a crowd interpret the same sound in three different ways, as thunder, as an angel, and as God. The main stages along the aesthetic way towards higher kinds of consciousness may be characterized as follows.

(1) *Material sensation*, like the glimpse of a color-patch, line, sound, etc., as one halts for an instant his practical adjustments in daily life.

(2) *Form perception* or pure aesthetic experience, which is realized when we reach complete detachment from practical and egotistic demands and find pleasure in pattern for its own sake, as in contemplating the frontispiece.

(3) *Artistic response* to significant art, that is, to works of art in which form, import, and other factors, are felt as fused into a finely balanced whole. Such an experience is typical or authentic artistic experience, for, as Suzanne K. Langer, declares, "The most distinctive characteristic of art [is] that its import is not separable from the form (the picture, poem, dance, etc.) that expresses it." (*Feeling and Form*, p. 394.)

(4) *Spiritual aesthesis* is any enjoyment of the higher values (see Chapter III) of the mental life as they are invoked by effective artistic creations. This stage represents a relative decrease in concern for configuration and a growing detachment "from transitory material values in favor of the eternal values of the soul" (Mark Halpern).

(5) *Cosmic consciousness* consists in an awareness of the linkage of any present experience with the totality of existence. It is usually distinguished by some kind of intense realization or sharing in the order and wholeness of the universe. (See Chapter III.) Its realization is most often approached through certain modes of philosophical thought and of artistic creations. It cannot, however, be either thought or perceived; it must be intuited. It remains essentially aesthetic in character because it flows from the contemplation of reality as an ordered harmony.

In the attainment of these higher forms of consciousness, artistic experience often provides the take-off field, as illustrated in my experience at Koyasan (Chapter VI). The full, satisfying, self-sufficient appreciation of superb works of Cosmic Art often brings one to the borderland of an inclusive unity which constitutes ultimate spiritual or mystical consciousness.

(6) *Mystic union* and *absolute consciousness* transcend form altogether. They pass beyond thought, love, beauty, and joy, although the essences of these spiritual values become blended in the new whole. Mystic union is an ineffable experience in which both self and object are dissolved and absorbed into a higher intuitive unity or identification. This experience is pervaded with a deep, strong sense of awe, tranquillity, and bliss. While mystic experi-

ence of this supreme kind is relatively rare, it occurs in many milder and imperfect forms.

Mark Halpern thus describes Absolute Consciousness: "There is no subject as well as no object. . . . What really happens is that only the little personality-self has disappeared; but the Eternal Individuality of the Real Self—without beginning and without end—shines forth in the unclouded radiance of the Blazing Truth that It is Itself—that Absolute Consciousness. That is the Ultimate Awareness . . . *Sustained and Permanent.*" (Letter, February 27, 1955.)

This six-fold evolution of consciousness along the aesthetic path displays several general characteristics. In the beginning, material sensation occupies attention, whereas at the end both object and subject have been resolved into one grand intuitive divine harmony. "The richness of emotional meaning increases as we add details from level to level," and as we advance from instinct to different cultural and more universal levels of emotion. (Stephen C. Pepper, *Principles of Art Appreciation*, p. 130.) In the first two stages material-formal interests prevail, whereas in the last three spiritual content predominates and culminates in mystical union. "Within the expansion or unfolding of consciousness we come closer and closer to identifying ourselves with the totality of the universe." (Lester Knorr, Doctor's Thesis, p. 126.)

In the contemplative process one's dominant personality-interest determines the level at which he lingers longest, but other interests and the desire for novelty impel him to go searching at other levels. Morphotic artists and devotees tend to the false assumption that aesthetic delight is confined to the stage of pure-form contemplation. Here an obvious proposition of fundamental importance needs

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to be stated forcibly once for all: there are in truth smaller and larger ranges and levels of aesthetic enjoyment, and the aesthetic attitude may fluctuate happily among all stages. Even the highest mystical stage is regarded by some philosophers (for instance, by Baldwin, in Chapter VIII) as being best understood and interpreted in terms of aesthetic experience.

In general, truth, goodness, beauty, and holiness alike are realized in multitudes of particular forms. (Holiness, preferably spelled wholiness, is used to cover all varieties of religious values.) My long, intensive analysis of religious values ended in a list of fifteen, and I want to enjoy all of them in turn. Likewise among all fine arts, and within any one of them, there are multifarious aesthetic delights, simple and voluminous, instantaneous and prolonged. The realms of beauty are endless and eternal and divine.

Authentic and sincere Cosmic Arts are attractive and important for their power to carry the mind into the richer joys of the spiritual life. The lower delights are not really left behind because they become strangely transformed, uplifted, and assimilated in the larger experience.

Since richness and balance of value-experience provides the basic criterion of human happiness and well-being, every lover of fine art has the inalienable right to declare his independence from any dogma which would restrict his aesthetic enjoyment, for example, to perceptual pattern. Nevertheless, the attainment of true power, freedom, and bliss in aesthetic appreciation requires persevering discipline in the observer.

A multitude of values and forms may be interwoven in Cosmic Arts of all kinds, to become helicopters for

the divine potentialities in our human nature. Space allows only a brief discussion of four kinds of human goods, the famous quartet of truth, goodness, beauty, and holiness. These are the collective fruits respectively of the rational, practical-ethical, emotive-aesthetic, and religious drives and strivings within us. Any one of these mighty interests may dominate our personalities. It lies in the very nature of any value to impel us either to continue, to repeat, or to extend it.

Artists may embody and enhance any of these interests in stirring forms which awaken us to fuller experience of reality. This possibility rests upon the fact that these interests represent the four fundamental philosophical approaches which we can take to total existence: we can think, act, enjoy, or worship. The four major values tend to intertwine and coalesce in the more complex works of art, notably in poetry and drama. Their amazing coalescence is soon discovered in pursuing any one of them. Thus if a person is predominantly interested in fine art and beauty, he quickly learns that beauty closely involves truth, goodness, and holiness. Keats declared, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." Similarly the rational pursuit of truth leads to the illumination of beauty and all other values. Thus the chief values of life interpenetrate—because they are all reenforcing expressions and aspirations of our unitary minds.

A person with an Oriental background is likely to condense these chief goods of life into a single concept and name. Thus Krishnamurti has declared, "Truth is the completeness of feeling and thought in action, the intensity of harmonious living, not in some distant future but in the present." Jesus affirmed, "I am the truth." He did not mean to assert, "I am a scientific proposition,"

but rather to claim a complete personality in which the main values of life coalesced into a satisfying, working whole. In perfecting such an integrated self one becomes more and more Godlike. It was in this sense of abundant living that Jesus Christ, I think, invited us to become one with him and one with God. He formulated the most inclusive possible goal for man's existence when he said in Matthew 5:8, "Be ye therefore perfect (complete) even as your father in heaven is perfect." In the third sentence of the *Confessions* of St. Augustine we read, "Thou awakest us to delight in Thy praise; for Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee."

The point of these paragraphs is that any one of the four universal values may provide a way of large and delightful mental expansion. It is the solemn duty of cosmic artists to achieve such symbolic artistic transformations of these and other basic values as will awaken our divine potentialities and draw us onward toward the perfections of "the life divine." Devotion to any one of the grand values will bring spiritual expansion and eventually involve us in all other values and in a total view of the universe; it will connect us in principle with all things, fill us with cosmic consciousness, and sometimes lead us to deep mystical identification.

Let us now consider how the major values may be expanded Godward through the vehicles of the fine arts. An example of the transformation of an ethical value may well come first. The landscape of one's life comprises a variety of valleys and hills with few mountain peaks. Each region produces its own kind of joy and tribulation. The valleys contain the long trails of daily duties, drudgeries, and delights. Occasionally the happy,

cumulative retrospect of a thousand duties well done may lift one to a peak of insight and joy. I was once so lifted to such a peak by the elevating power of one solemn, climactic pronouncement, spoken with commanding poetic eloquence, by one of America's greatest clergymen of the century, George A. Gordon of Boston: "Duty seen in the light of God's eyes, beheld in the fire of God's presence—that is religion in its aboriginal sovereignty, awe, beauty, and power."

I know now that this experience was an example, from the region of practical goodness, of the cosmic and mystical transformation of experience. Two mighty metaphors of a superb literary artist expanded what had been drab duty into clear and significant insight. It was a cosmic experience because I realized, in a sweeping philosophical panorama, the linkage of all deeds of kindness with total reality. The aesthetic force of Gordon's words and my metaphysical preparation were swift preparatory stages for a stirring mystical intuition in which art and metaphysics were elevated and blended into a larger experience. In those instants of speedy, exhilarating discovery and unfoldment, no analysis could occur. The concealed logic must have been something like this: Our kind deeds are indeed God's wishes. His approval endows them with Godlike qualities. Then, doing them in the name of a disciple means a manifestation of God within the limits of my action and consciousness. In an act of kindness I am indeed one with the ever present, sustaining God. And this is the essence of mystical experience, the joyful, ineffable feeling of union with the great Cosmic Artist.

One of my most esteemed friends in Peiping was a fine painter named Ling Wen Yuan. He had been City Treas-

urer, but when politics dislodged him, he became Director of the Peiping School of Art. He was an exceedingly kind and noble gentleman. He put his automobile and chauffeur at my disposal every other day during my sojourn in his city. He confessed to no interest in religion. I wondered about the sources of his moral greatness. Finally I discovered that it was the indirect fruit of the mastery and absorption of the Confucian classics. The ethics and art of this superb philosophical literature served him as his religion. This was possible for the profound reason that Confucian ethics has both a cosmic basis and a religious sanction. And it was the art in these ethical works which made them unwittingly the religion of this wonderful gentleman.

Some Confucian propositions follow, from *The Wisdom of China and India* by Lin Yutang (Random House, 1942, pp. 845, 848, 858, 859, 861): "The *Book of Songs* says: 'The hawk soars to the heavens above and fishes dive to the depths below.' That is to say, there is no place in the highest heavens above nor in the deepest waters below where the moral law is not to be found. . . . These moral laws form the same system with the laws by which the seasons succeed each other and the sun and moon appear with the alternations of day and night. . . . Truth means the fulfillment of our self; and moral law means following the law of our being. . . . *Harmony* or moral order is the universal law in the world. . . . Oh, how great is the divine moral law of the Sage! How magnificent it is!"

Ethical values thus may be expanded, through artistic vehicles, into religious and mystical intuitions. Rational and aesthetic experiences even more readily become transformed into mystical ecstasy. Let us note succinctly the

steps from creative thought to Deity. A scientist discovers and verifies a law of natural order. He sees that this law is intricately implicated in the whole orderly system of the world. He has already passed the portal to cosmic consciousness. Now he is ready for the mountain-top view, nay rather, for an aerial flight to take in many mountain peaks, for clearly the vast system of the universe requires a systemizer, an intelligent controller. Suddenly he feels the mysterious, invisible power and presence of a spiritual World Ground, the immanent supporter of all phenomena and all selves. Thus he may pass beyond logical analysis to mystical insight.

Albert Einstein once testified that "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. . . . This insight into the mystery of life . . . has also given rise to religion. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in the most primitive forms—this knowledge, this feeling is at the center of true religiousness." (*Living Philosophies*, Simon & Schuster, 1937, pp. 3-7.) On another occasion Einstein declared, "[The scientist's] religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection." (*New York Times*, Magazine section, April 24, 1955.)

J. Arthur Thomson, author of some thirty-three books on natural science, has many imposing words about "the fact of beauty. . . . A synoptic view of animate nature must include the fact of the pervasiveness of beauty. . . . There are curiously few general affirmations that we can

make about Nature; one is that Nature is in great part intelligible, . . . and another is that Nature is in greater part beautiful. . . . Aesthetic emotion [is] another right-of-way path towards reality. . . . We may discern the touch of the Divine Artist." (*The System of Animate Nature*, Williams and Norgate, London, 1920, Vol. I, pp. xi, 259, 282, 284.)

Such facts about nature impel us to conclude and to exclaim with the poet, Tegner:

"Oh, if so much beauty doth reveal
Itself in every vein of life and nature,
How beautiful must be the Source itself,
The Every Bright One!"

Delightful examples of how the higher spiritual values tend to coalesce is found in many of the exquisite prayers in the current Zoroastrian prayer book called *Homage unto Ahura Mazda* (Karachi, 1947, pp. 161-162, 236). Here philosophic grasp of truth, poetic exuberance, and religious fervor are inseparably blended in didactic psalms to Ahura Mazda, "the Eternal God of Wisdom:"

"I greet thee in all the universe, thou, who dost reveal thyself in thy nature and are glorified in thy nature. Whole nature is saturated with the divine life of the creator. Thou, Ahura Mazda, dost clothe thyself in its resplendent garment. All nature is aglow with thy presence. Thou dost sing through the whispers of the wind in the trees, through the murmurs of the waters in the brooks, through the beaks of the birds and through human mouths. . . . Music is the heaven-born boon to man. Music is divine. Music lifts the mind and fastens it upon the divine in man. Music creates religious fervor. The highest heaven . . . is the Abode of Song, Ahura Mazda. Thou art the

first and foremost musician. Thy creation is a song sublime, O thou divine Songster of heaven and earth."

The preceding paragraphs have emphasized the rational way to God through the vehicles of art. What our argument needs next is an account of how artists translate scientific-philosophical concepts into works of art which induce us to feel and intuit God and His world rather than to think and analyze them. In the field of the graphic arts we find notable examples of such transforming works in the scores of recent paintings devoted to the themes of cosmic creation and the immanence of God in the world. The wrapper design of this book suggests the universal eye of the Divine.

The evidence of God's activity in the world is so vast and multifarious that even its fragmentary expression would require hundreds of paintings, poems, musical compositions, and other artistic works. The poetic arts enjoy a conspicuous advantage over all others. While a painting or symphony necessarily has a limited range of expression for feeling and idea, a poem can expand them to the limits of creative genius and human endurance, for the purpose of expressing the incalculable harmonies and wonders of God's universe. A striking example of a poem of this kind is *The Torch-Bearers* of Alfred Noyes, in which he glorifies with sustained poetic power the most momentous truths which man has discovered about the universe. A high point in these three volumes comes near the end where the poet celebrates, in a tremendous procession of cosmic metaphors, his discovery of the meaning of the Mass.

Just as a scientist's feeling of wonder about a grand truth may grow into a deep religious feeling, so a beholder's feeling of aesthetic delight before a fine work

of Cosmic Art may elevate him into mystical ecstasy. The latter transformation is facilitated by the extensive similarities between aesthetic and religious experiences. (See Chapter VII.) Chapter VI contains a detailed example of how aesthetic conditions generated mystical experience. The transition from perception to spirit, from art to God, is accomplished in two different ways according to two kinds of art works, those that incorporate symbols of cosmic emotion and those that do not. In either case the end of the transformation is, in the words of Pope Pius XII concerning the function of art, "to break the narrow and agonizing circle of the finite in which man is enclosed in this life and to open a window to his mind yearning for the infinite." (Quoted in *Arts Digest*, January 1, 1955, p. 15.)

A mountain-peak aesthetic experience of a non-cosmic work of art may expand into religious value by a process analogous to the religious expansion of scientific experience. The conversion passes through two basic steps. First, one becomes aware of the cosmic causes and connections of the artistic creation. As aesthetic contemplation subsides, the wonder and mystery of the experience lingers on. How does it happen that earth and human beings have produced an amazing and multitudinous variety of beautiful things? Are accidents, atoms, or demons able to account for this stupendous fact? Evidently not. Then the second step occurs: this existential fact must be due to a beauty-loving God who works continually in things and minds to provoke the creation of beautiful creatures. When thus the center of contemplation moves from the perceived object to the idea of God, aesthetic experience may pass into religious devotion and sometimes into mystical delight.

When aesthetic response springs from artistic creations which plainly display cosmic symbols and fringes, the preceding expansion is more easily accomplished. Then, after the art appreciator has realized exalted aesthetic bliss, he is ready for an aerial flight to mystical joy, if the presented work provides him for the take-off with the necessary imagerial and symbolic wings. In every kind of mystical transformation the self transcends both sense preception and critical evaluation, and becomes aware of the fountain of all truth, goodness, and beauty, of the Maker and Lover of all things and all selves. In each case one breaks out of the limits of sensation and intellect, and feels or intuits the Creative Source of all perceptions, truths, and lovely beings. At that instant the particular work of art is apprehended as an integer in a vast, universal scheme of order and beauty. And as reason wanes and religious feeling rises, one no longer distinguishes object and self, particular and universal, because one intuits himself as continuous with an inclusive harmony, with the divine symphony of the spheres, with cosmic Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

Three testimonies follow concerning the power of aesthetic experience to expand into religious joy. A cosmic painter (Elaine Stevenson Michelsen) thus confesses, "I have long known that the aesthetic or the beautiful is the experience that leads into worship, adoration, and the religious experience. This fact should be more universally recognized."

A recent letter from a California woman (Edith Jensen) develops the following theme: "I thank cosmic art from the bottom of my heart for awakening me to beautiful experiences, such as the sunset over the Pacific. No longer am I alone, but a heavenly Presence is closer to

me than my breathing. Because of cosmic art every day grows more beautiful in the Light of the Divine Spirit. Count me among those who desire to give their lives to cosmic art."

Painter L. Vladimir Goriansky affirms, "It is a fact that art leads us into spiritual experiences and religious contemplation, and the reverse is also true, that religious contemplation and spiritual experience lead into good art." He continues in another letter, "We are awakening to a new glorious sunrise, to an Age of Illumination, when the illuminated ones, those initiated into Cosmic Art and vision, will directionize the future. Modernistic art must be recast into a more significant and truly spiritual goal. Works of cosmic beauty will help to carry forward and establish this new Age of Illumination."

We know that we must resort to the art of poetry for expressing, to the fullest possible artistic limits, the yearnings and battles of mankind for eternal life. And fortunately a tremendous new body of metaphysical and mystical poetry has already inaugurated the new Age of Illumination. This poetry radiates from the master metaphysician, mystic, and poet, Sri Aurobindo, and his Ashram in Pondicherry, India. During a period of nearly fifty years before his passing in 1950, he created what is probably the greatest epic in the English language and the longest poem (23,831 lines of iambic blank verse) in any language of the modern world. I venture the judgment that it is the most comprehensive, integrated, beautiful, and perfect cosmic poem ever composed. It ranges symbolically from a primordial cosmic void, through earth's darkness and struggles, to the highest realms of supramental spiritual existence, and illumines every important concern of man, through verse of unparalleled

THE HUNGRY EYE

massiveness, magnificence, and metaphorical brilliance.

This epic is called *Savitri, A Legend and a Symbol*, 1951, published by the Ashram. A sentence from K. D. Sethna (*The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo*, 1947, p. 119) indicates its plot. "Savitri, fighting Satyavan's death, is in Sri Aurobindo's hands an avatar of the immortal Beauty and Love plunging into the trials of terrestrial life and seeking to overcome them not only in herself but also in the world she has embraced as her own: she is sworn to put an utter end to earth's estrangement from God." The poem begins,

"It was the hour before the Gods awake. . . .
A fathomless zero occupied the world."

And it ends,

"She brooded through her stillness on a thought
Deep-guarded by her mystic folds of light,
And in her bosom nursed a greater dawn."

Savitri is perhaps the most powerful artistic work in the world for expanding man's mind toward the Absolute.

The persistent theme of *The Hungry Eye* is the need for expanding the creation and appreciation of those fine arts, here called cosmic, which unite aesthetic satisfaction with spiritual illumination. The need for this expansion rests solidly upon the inherent power of Cosmic Arts to engender in human beings enduring delights, civilized sentiments, mutual understanding, and integration of mind.

Progress in the creation of Cosmic Arts demands of artists a tremendous supplement to their technical art-school education; namely, a metaphysical-religious training which will really entail a fuller and surer comprehension of the nature of reality and the destiny of man. Creative appreciation of Cosmic Arts requires the increas-

ing cultivation of two kinds of vision, outer and inner, perceptual and spiritual vision.

"It is a common experience for persons who have just become well acquainted with the graphic arts," declares Hunter Mead (*Introduction to Aesthetics*, p. 38) "to feel that they have acquired a new pair of eyes." He illustrates his assertion by showing how a keener observer may become aware of many new intrinsic values in lines, such as their being alive, bold, tenuous, rhythmic, meditative, satisfying, etc. It is this developing sensitivity to the endless delights inherent in artistic forms in all the arts which constitutes new eyes, and new ears, in short, finer outer aesthetic perception.

The other kind of vision is an intuitive illumination of a different kind. To experience it we need to learn, as it were, to fly imaginatively, cosmically, beyond sensation to spirit, from symbol to meaningful insight, at the same time that we keep sensory symbols in view, in a kind of synoptic sky-view of existence. The Italian painter, Gerardo Dottori, lives by the conviction that his artistic mission in this air age is to interpret landscapes as they appear from the sky, and to elevate the earth to paradise, rather than to bring paradise to earth. He seeks, he says, "to stylize, spiritualize, divinize nature and man" by employing the unique combination of a futuristic principle (dynamic rhythms), abstract symbols, and an aerial viewpoint. (See Plate V.)

"The only real voyage of discovery, the only Fountain of Youth," declares Marcel Proust, "consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes, in seeing the universe with the eyes of another, of a hundred others, in seeing the hundred universes that each of them sees. And this we can do with a Renoir or a Debussy; with

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such as they we fly indeed from star to star." (*The Maxims of Marcel Proust*, edited and translated by Justin O'Brien, Columbia University Press.)

As lovers of Cosmic Arts sharpen their responsiveness to artistic creations which radiate overtones and auras of significance and worth, they progressively acquire a kind of third eye of illumination, a "cosmological eye." This is a convenient name for their growing power to discern spiritual values in certain works of art and to trace the thoughts of God in the vast realms of nature. The "cosmological eye" signifies the intuitive vision of the authentic, disciplined seer. It represents the kind of clear, pure, and wide vision without which the people perish spiritually. It includes the threefold capacity, richly to appreciate superior works of art, adequately to know the laws and conditions of self-realization and of the good society, and joyfully to realize the poise and peace of harmony with the Supreme Spirit.



Cross Section of a Nautilus Shell

“Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life’s unresting sea!”

(Last stanza of *The Chambered Nautilus*
by Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1858.)



Plate I. *The Birth of Psyche* by Einar Jonsson.



Plate II. *Gautama Buddha* by Mrs. Sass Brunner.

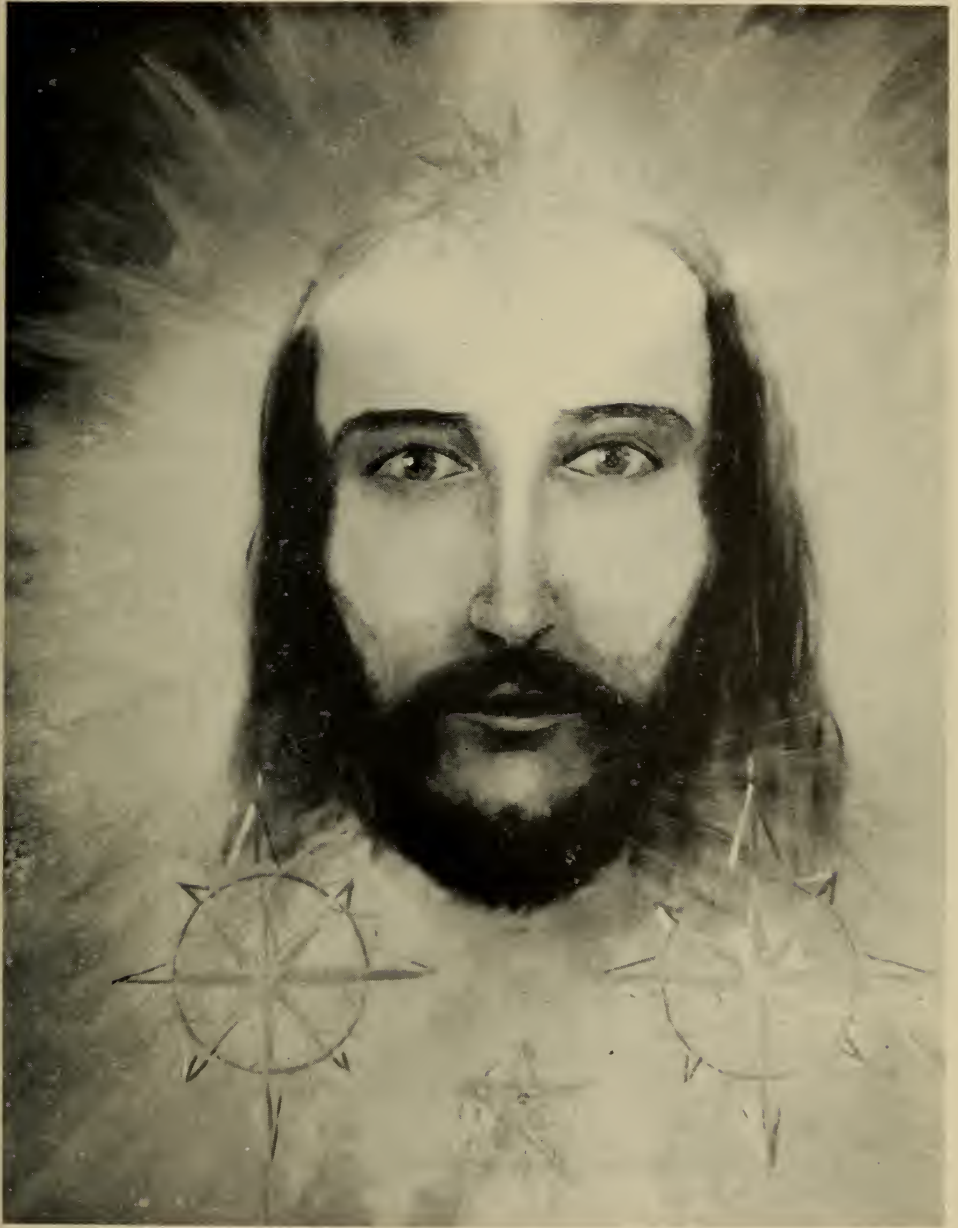


Plate III. *Christ Awareness* by Shari Martin.



Plate IV. *The Reveille of the Atom* by Bernhard O. Wahl.



Plate V. *Creation* by Gerardo Dottori.

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What people say about

COSMIC ART

American Artists

"A book on Cosmic Art such as Dr. Piper has outlined will open the eyes of this generation to a brand new kind of art which is universal. It is my considered judgment that he is particularly fitted to write this book" (Ivan Mestrovic, a colleague for seven years).

Foreign Artists and Others

India: "You may not be fully aware of the extent of attention and respect your work on Cosmic Art is commanding in India. You are doing, I believe, a monumental work" (Robert S. Steele, traveling American writer). "Deeply interested in your most notable endeavor." "Happy beyond words about your stupendous plan." "The whole world will be greatly indebted to your noble self" (Swami Sivananda).

New Zealand: "A terrible responsibility; may your sacred task succeed." *Israel:* "Your work will awaken universal interest and open new paths to the art of tomorrow."

Germany: "Will be of the greatest international significance." "Art is one of the means which the Absolute uses in order to set himself forth." "Unbounded admiration for your projection and conception thereof." *France:* "Very great satisfaction with your intention; it comes in a period [1948] when painting in Paris is more and more materialistic. Your plan proclaims the hatching of a new direction in the art of the future."

A Mexican painter writing from Paris in 1955: "I talked with many of the younger painters in Europe, and they all feel that the religious motive, and metaphysical, in modern painting is gaining ground every day despite what the 'art critics' say."

England: "One of the whispers for those with ears to hear of the coming spiritual age."

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WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

Stop! Think! The answer is Happiness: food, home, friends, wisdom, beauty, God, and other delights, which add up to An Abundant Life. These are the basic needs of our marvelous human nature, and happiness requires their fulfillment. Beauty in artistic creations makes us human—and pleases us—by objectifying, enhancing, and communicating a multitude of significant emotions which we might otherwise miss. Fine arts may provide the means of civilizing us by unfolding our divine potentialities. Beauty is as necessary to man's soul as bread is to his body. "If you have two loaves, sell one and buy a flower" (Chinese proverb).

WHAT IS COSMIC ART?

COSMIC ART is unique in expressing man's most momentous feelings concerning birth and death, suffering and aspiration, evolution and eternity, God and wholeness. THE HUNGRY EYE heralds the dawn of a wonderful new age of art, of whole-souled COSMIC ART, and shows how such art may promote that spiritual growth which is the essence of happiness.

COSMIC ART turns attention from external nature to the great desires and issues of the human heart. Since it deals with ideas, it must be expressive and more or less abstract. It belongs to an age marked by atomic dreads, dangerous forces, technological inventions, and an unprecedented need for the philosophic tranquillities that great COSMIC ART may inspire. The framework of this book is a carefully verified, idealistic philosophy. COSMIC ART is at once dreadful and fascinating, realistic and aspiring, serious and joyful, challenging and beautiful. Satisfy the hunger of your soul's eye by the adventurous reading of this INTRODUCTION TO COSMIC ART.

